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Encountering Germans: the Experience of Occupation in the Nord, 1914-1918

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Encountering Germans: the Experience of Occupation in the Nord, 1914-1918

by
James E. Connolly

**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in History Research**

School of Arts & Humanities
King's College London

Originally submitted in May 2012. Revised version dated December
2012.

Supervised by Professor Richard Vinen

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Abstract

This thesis examines the occupation of the French department of the Nord in the First World War. The focus is on the French responses to occupation, especially the way in which certain actions were understood as patriotic or non-patriotic – acceptable or unacceptable. These behaviours are categorised and studied via three main themes, what might be termed collaboration, criminality, and resistance, although I argue for a reformulation of some of these Second-World-War conceptual categories, taking into consideration the specificities of this occupation. It is demonstrated that the occupied French created their own war culture, a *culture de l'occupé*, based around notions of respectability, acceptability, and social-patriotic mores. Those breaching the limits of these norms faced opprobrium and punishment, both during and after the war, although this was never as violent or extensive as elsewhere (such as occupied Belgium from 1918, or occupied Europe in 1944-5 and beyond). For some, the moral economy was redefined, creating a situation in which criminality or misconduct became effective modes of survival. This, combined with economic difficulties, led to a belief among chroniclers of occupied life that crime was increasing, and that young people were particularly involved in this. Fears of moral corruption abounded. The occupation culture demanded opposition to the Germans and expressions of patriotism, often containing a performative element. This could be achieved through the protests of French notables, symbolic gestures carried out by the wider population, and active resistance involving a minority of *occupés*. Whatever the success of resistance, some forms were praised after the occupation, with the French and British governments expressing their gratitude through compensation and medals. The official occupation narrative in the post-war period became one of suffering and resistance, and suffering *as* resistance; but the occupation memory remained local, eventually overshadowed by that of the Second World War.

In loving memory of Edward Connolly, 22nd July 1933-7th December
2012. You will be missed, Grandad.

Contents

List of Illustrations	6
Acknowledgements	8
Introduction	11
- Aims	11
- Methodology	13
- <i>Oubliés de la Grande Guerre?</i>	16
- The Specificity of the Nord	20
- The Occupation in Context	28
Part I: <i>Une Sacrée désunion? Mauvaise conduite</i>	43
- I – <i>Collaboration horizontale? Sexual mauvaise conduite</i>	47
- II – General <i>mauvaise conduite</i>	64
- III – Post-war Denunciations and the Male Specificity	78
- IV – Retribution and Revenge: Popular Reprisals	98
- V – Moral Borderlands: Criminality during the Occupation	109
Part II: Popular Patriotism and Resistance <i>avant la majuscule</i>	159
- VI – Notable Protests: Respectable Resistance (<i>Coups de gueule polis</i>)	167
- VII – Symbolic Resistance (<i>Coups de cœur</i>)	207
- VIII – Active Resistance (<i>Coups de poker, coups d'éclat</i>)	232
Part III: Beyond the Occupation	268
- IX – Epilogue: Remembering and Forgetting	268
- X – Conclusions	294
Appendix	306
Bibliography	319

List of Illustrations

Table showing the statistical breakdown of suspect individuals in January-April 1917 interviews with <i>rapatriés</i> .	49
Table showing the statistical breakdown of suspects compiled by the British Intelligence Service, July-October 1918.	49
Table showing police numbers for the arrondissement of Lille, 1916.	120
Figure 1: Electoral map of 1914 for the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region.	306
Figure 2: Map of occupied France in 1917.	307
Figure 3.1: ADN 9R1193, postcard (face).	308
Figure 3.2: Postcard (reverse).	308
Figure 3.3: Postcard (face).	309
Figure 3.4: Postcard (reverse).	309
Figure 4: ADN 9R1229, photograph of son of the mayor of Marcq-en-Barœul with a German soldier.	310
Figure 5: ADN 9R580, report by Commissaire de Police Boinet, 7 th April 1916.	311
Figure 6: ADN 9R254, photo of Jules Claeys.	312

Figure 7: ADN 9R693, extract of the transcript of the conversation between the mayor of Lille and Captain Himmel, 24 th June 1915.	313
Figure 8: <i>Liller Kriegszeitung</i> , n°24, 25 th February 1915.	314
Figure 9: NA WO 106/45, extract from a questionnaire dropped by Allied planes into occupied France and Belgium	315
Figure 10: AN F23/373: Médaille des Victimes de l’Invasion, 1914-1918, bronze, awarded to M. Huet, from Laon (Aisne), 28 th February 1922.	316
Figure 11: Monument des Fusillés in Lille.	317
Figure 12: Monument on the tomb of Maertens (AML 4 H 76, booklet in commemoration of Georges Maertens).	318

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Introduction

Aims

In December 1918, an article appeared in the *Nordiste* press entitled ‘Les deux Pétain,’¹ eulogising the Marshal who had been met with a rapturous welcome in newly-liberated Lille in October.² For the modern reader, the notion of ‘deux Pétain’ evokes the distinction between the hero of 1916 and the collaborationist he would later become, although here the distinction was between Pétain as an eloquent leader and a quiet soul. Nevertheless, the key figure of the occupation of 1940-44 was thus linked to the end of that of 1914-18.

This is apt given a central aim of this thesis: to reinterpret analytical categories used by historians of the Second World War, reformulating them so that they are relevant for this earlier occupation, and to explore precursors to the Second-World-War experience. This thesis examines a geographical borderland but also a moral and political borderland, in which pre-forms of resistance and collaboration sometimes blend into each other. It uses the historiography relating to 1940-44 as a springboard but seeks to escape from the ‘tyranny’ of the occupation – the predominance of Vichy in French collective consciousness. ‘Occupation’ almost always evokes the Second World War. The Nazi occupation and its attendant socio-cultural, ethnic and moral cleavages left scars across the continent. The French in particular equate occupation with the Second World War, and especially with the collaborationist government in Vichy – yet this was not the only experience of military occupation in the twentieth century.

¹ AML 4H280: *L’Écho du Nord* (3rd December 1918).

² AML 4H279: *Le Progrès du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais* (31st October 1918); AML 4H280: *L’Écho* (31st October 1918).

This earlier, more localised occupation is relatively understudied, especially by Anglophone scholars.³ French historians are at the forefront of the revival of historical interest in this experience since the 1990s,⁴ but the topic still remains marginalised. Current studies tend to focus on the wider occupied area.⁵ This thesis takes a narrower approach, focusing on just one department – that of the Nord, 70% of which was occupied from 1914 to 1918.⁶ The subjects of inquiry are also less broad: rather than comprising a general history of the occupation, the concentration is on the French responses to the occupation, and the way in which the enemy presence was perceived and understood. Historians have recently developed the idea of the *culture de guerre*,⁷ a ‘broad-based system through which belligerent populations made sense of the war and persuaded themselves to continue fighting it.’⁸ This thesis argues for the existence of a *culture de l’occupé*, founded on a notion of respectability: unwritten, bourgeois social mores dictating what was considered as acceptable behaviour during the occupation, but also impacting how it was remembered.

The occupied war culture is examined via a handful of key themes: notions of misconduct (what I term ‘mauvaise conduite’), criminality, and resistance. I try to avoid anachronism and acknowledge that a certain conceptual elasticity is required to understand and document them. These subjects provide an insight into the multifarious ways in which the French responded to occupation, exposing both the ‘underbelly’ and the more ‘positive’ sides to the occupation. The idea – propagated by French writers

³ For the only English-language books on the topic, see Helen McPhail, *The Long Silence: Civilian Life under the German Occupation of Northern France, 1914-1918* (London, 1999); Richard Cobb, *French and Germans, Germans and French: A Personal Interpretation of France under Two Occupations, 1914-1918/1940-1944* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1983).

⁴ See, for example, Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre: Humanitaires et culture de guerre* (Paris, 1998); idem, *Les cicatrices rouges 14-18: France et Belgique occupées* (Paris, 2010); Philippe Nivet, *La France occupée 1914-1918* (Paris, 2011).

⁵ However, many unpublished *mémoires de maîtrise* have been local studies. See bibliography.

⁶ Yves-Marie Hilaire (ed.), *Histoire du Nord Pas-de-Calais de 1900 à nos jours* (Toulouse, 1982), p.206.

⁷ Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2005), p.159.

⁸ Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2003), p.xv.

since 1918⁹ – of widespread patriotism and resistance as the most common and almost unique response to the German presence will thus be called into question somewhat. This thesis will demonstrate that there was much resistance, which did not always fit neatly into established categories, but also many other ways in which the French adapted to occupation, often influenced by the notion of respectability – including a precursor to collaboration and accommodation,¹⁰ here seen as part of the same phenomenon.

Methodology

This thesis draws upon various archives. The bulk of documentation comes from the *Archives départementales du Nord*, and the *archives municipales* of Lille and Tourcoing. The aim is an in-depth study of the most important area and the archives within this area, and a less systematic trawl of other archives. The result is an occasional preponderance of examples emanating from Lille, Roubaix or Tourcoing, rather than some of the smaller communes, towns and villages of the Nord. This is because these were (and are) the highest population centres, and the areas where most documentation was kept.¹¹

Material consulted includes police reports, court and municipal administrative documents, letters between municipal authorities and the Germans, German posters, diaries of occupied French people, transcripts of interviews with French people

⁹ See, for example, Jean-Claude Auriol, *Les ténèbres de l'occupation* (Fontenay-le Comte, 2008); Henri de Forge and Jean Maucière, *Feuilles françaises dans la tourmente. Les héros de la presse clandestine dans le Nord envahi, 1914-1918* (Paris, 1932); Claudine Wallart, *C'était hier, le département du Nord... Le Nord en Guerre – 1914-1918* (Lille, 2008).

¹⁰ See 'Accommodements' in Philippe Burrin, *La France à l'heure allemande, 1940-1944* (Paris, 1995), pp.181-361; Rab Bennett, *Under the Shadow of the Swastika: The Moral Dilemmas of Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Europe* (London, 1999), p.43-5. For uses in the context of 1914-18, see Sébastien Debarge, 'Fourmies, ville occupée pendant la Grande Guerre,' mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction d'Annette Becker (Lille III, 1997), p.165; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.15; Philippe Nivet, 'Les femmes dans la France occupée (1914-1918),' in Marion Trévisi and Philippe Nivet (eds.), *Les femmes et la guerre de l'Antiquité à 1918* (Paris, 2010), p.299.

¹¹ The population of Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing was about 450,000 in November 1918. SHD 17N394: 'Rapport sur l'aide apportée par les troupes britanniques à la population libérée pendant l'avance du 1^{er} Oct. au 25 Nov. 1918,' p.1.

repatriated from the occupied area, and French government citations. Local newspapers were also examined, as was a wide range of published material, such as memoirs and histories of the occupation, and not just that of the Nord. Historians always look through the eyes of the powerful; it is possible there may have also been a different *culture de l'occupé* among the 'classes populaires' or others, less focused on respectability than that which dominates this thesis. Indeed, often those held in disdain by the adherents of the *culture* did not themselves buy into it. Thus whilst the *culture* put forward here perhaps seems cohesive, it merely provides one tool through which we can better understand this occupation, and does not explain all occupation behaviours, motivations, or world-views.

Lacunae appear in the archival record, due to the whims of contemporary archivists, as well as the ravages of time.¹² Particular problems were created due to the destruction or loss of sources both during the final German retreat of 1918 and the events of the Second World War. During the occupation itself the creation of documents was restricted because of a lack of paper, as well as German regulations governing most correspondence between communes or with unoccupied France.¹³ Consequently, often it is impossible to follow the whole sequence of events, a problem acknowledged here but not reiterated throughout the thesis. Unless a sequel is mentioned, it should be assumed that related documentation has been lost.

Further, the subjects studied represent experiences and perspectives that were not easily preserved in textual or other forms. For example, people were not likely to boast about acts of resistance during the occupation itself, given the consequences of such claims; and

¹² For example, British military police files covering northern France were poorly conserved, and virtually all appear to have been destroyed by a failure to repair the roof of a leaky hut. Thanks to Julian Putkowski for this information.

¹³ ADN 9R792: German poster for France and Belgium, 3rd April 1917; *Bulletin de Lille* (henceforth *BdL*), n°169 (25th June 1916), 'Actes de l'Autorité allemande: Proclamation du Général Commandant l'Armée du 25 November 1915, en vertu de l'Ordre du 1^{er} Avril 1916,' point 9b, article 10.

even less likely to document behaviours and mindsets running contrary to the accepted norms, such as acts of criminality or relations with the Germans. All evidence is rendered questionable by the variety of restrictions and authorial motives, from vengeance to self-praise, a problem heightened in the inter-war period when occupation conduct was even more contested. I am studying perceptions more than the objective reality, making this uncertainty itself a subject of study. Practically all sources used should therefore be considered to be *a priori* problematic as definitive indicators of historical 'truth.' Authorship issues also arise, with documents often lacking a designated author or date, or information on the authors. I have endeavoured to be explicit about the problems such sources pose.

Sources are in French, the local patois, and English. Some attempt has been made to engage with German sources, within the limits of the author's current linguistic capacities, but only in a cursory manner. Flemish sources have not been consulted, partly because the focus is on the francophone culture, partly because the greater part of the Flemish-speaking Nord was not occupied. Further, leading French historians on the subject focus almost exclusively on French-language sources.

The thesis is thus based on a rigorous investigation of considerable Anglo-French archival material, reinforced by secondary sources, especially the recent historical work on this occupation (and occupations in general), and on the wider First World War experience. This allows for a detailed local study to be understood in a wider context; conclusions are inevitably suggestive but hopefully informative for the greater occupied area from 1914-1918, the occupation of the Second World War, and occupations in general.

Oubliés de la Grande Guerre?

The general consensus among historians is that the occupation faded rapidly from public-collective and historical memory,¹⁴ in France and beyond. The first period of 'forgetting' comprised the inter-war years; the second started with the occupation of the Second World War, which overshadowed that of the First¹⁵ and has dominated French memory ever since.¹⁶ Indeed, by the 'revival' period in the history of the 1914-18 occupation in the 1990s, Annette Becker felt justified in entitling her book on the occupied population (and prisoners of war) *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre*.¹⁷

The French memory of First World War was characterised by the primacy of the soldiers' experience: combatants were seen as victims of violence, whereas the violence suffered by unarmed civilian populations was ignored.¹⁸ The memory of the combatants' suffering was 'hypertrophied,' whereas a 'hyperamnesia' surrounded the civilian experience, especially that of the occupied populations.¹⁹ Becker and others argue that these two phenomena were inextricably connected, as the formerly occupied populations sought to re-insert themselves into the national wartime narrative of trench combat. Even on monuments to combatants, the French only commemorated those who had died (hence

¹⁴ Françoise Thébaud, *La femme au temps de la guerre de 14* (Paris, 1986), p.45; John Horne, 'Demobilizing the Mind: France and the Legacy of the Great War, 1919-1939,' *French History and Civilization. Papers from the George Rudé Seminar*, vol. 2 (2009), p.115; Nicolas Beaupré and Christian Ingrao, 'Marginaux, marginalité et marginalisation durant la guerre,' in Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Jean-Jacques Becker (eds.), *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre, 1914-1918: Histoire et Culture* (Paris, 2004), p.767; Margaret H. Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front* (New York, 2000), p.5, 282-3; Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War* (London, 2002), (trans.) Catherine Temerson, p.54, 89, 200-201.

¹⁵ Thébaud, *Femme*, p.45.

¹⁶ Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001), pp.1-20; Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), (trans.) Arthur Goldhammer; Éric Conan and Henry Rousso (eds.), *Vichy: an Everpresent Past* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1998), (trans.) Nathan Bracher; Richard J. Golsan, *Vichy's Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* (Lincoln, 2000); Bertrand M. Gordon, 'The "Vichy Syndrome" Problem in History,' *French Historical Studies*, 19:2 (1995), pp.495-518; Olivier Laliéu, 'L'invention du "Devoir de mémoire,"' *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 69, Numéro spécial: D'un siècle l'autre (2001), pp.83-94; Pierre Nora, 'Le Syndrome, son passé, son avenir,' *French Historical Studies*, 19 :2 (1995), pp.487-493.

¹⁷ Nivet, *France*, p.10.

¹⁸ Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *Understanding*, p.45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.90; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.14.

the name *monuments aux morts*).²⁰ This refusal to commemorate and remember the living placed great strain on the remembered experience of occupied civilians, situated on the margins of an already marginalised wartime experience (that of civilians at the home front). For Becker, this is why most monuments in the occupied region were ‘normal’ *monuments aux morts*,²¹ which evoked the ‘normalité de la souffrance’ – the inhabitants of the Nord, like all other French people, had suffered and died for *la patrie*. In fact, ‘on finit par être tellement culpabilisé d’avoir été différent dans la guerre qu’on nie des souffrances exemplaires pour mieux oublier ces temps où la région était différente, donc soupçonnable d’abandon des valeurs du patriotisme ou d’héroïsme.’²²

However, there are a few monuments in the Nord dedicated specifically to the occupation, all built in the inter-war period.²³ Indeed, during this time and among those who had lived through it, there was a *local* memory of the occupation. This memory was mainly one of victimhood, suffering, and resistance (or suffering *as* resistance). It was expressed further through ceremonies dedicated to key occupation events or persons,²⁴ the regional press,²⁵ and inter-war texts on occupied France.²⁶ A centralised memory also existed in the form of medals and other expressions of governmental gratitude or

²⁰ Becker, *Oubliés*, p.362.

²¹ See documents in ADN 70J215.

²² Becker, *Oubliés*, p.365.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.365-6; idem, ‘Mémoire et commémoration: les “atrocités” allemandes de la Première Guerre mondiale dans le nord de la France,’ *Revue du Nord*, 74:295 (April-June 1992), p.339; idem, ‘D’une guerre à l’autre: mémoire de l’occupation et de la résistance: 1914-1940,’ *Revue du Nord*, 76: 306 (July-September 1994), pp.453-65; AML 4H76: Séance of Lille’s Conseil Municipal, 9th February 1920 and 9th December 1923.

²⁴ See AML 4H322: Adjoint du mairie de Lille, L Banbrine, to M. Walker (Consul d’Angleterre), 15th October 1919; Président du Conseil d’Administration du Matin to mayor, 21st May 1919, et passim; AML 4H322 bis; *Progrès* (20-21st October 1920); *Le Matin* (20th October 1919); AML 4H75: Poster, ‘Comité Jacquet: Pose d’un plaque commémorative,’ Lille, 21st May 1923; AML 4H76: *Le Réveil du Nord* (20th May 1923), Edouard & Fernard Plouvier de Lille, Chevaliers de la Légion d’Honneur, Souvenir de la Fête du 5 Mai 192; AML 4H75-8, passim.

²⁵ See especially articles in *Progrès*, *La Croix du Nord*, *La Dépêche de Lille et de la Région du Nord*, and *L’Écho du Nord*, in AML 4H279-80, 282-3 and 4H75-8.

²⁶ See bibliography and Nivet, *France*, p.337-340.

recognition awarded to former *occupés* in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁷ Yet even this local memory had begun to fade by the mid- to late-1930s, so much so that authors such as Antoine Redier decried ‘l’injurieux oubli dans lequel la frivolité publique’ had ‘étouffé depuis vingt ans’ the memory of certain resisters.²⁸ This was exacerbated by the dominance of the second occupation in both French culture and historiography since 1945, the final nail in a coffin that has only recently been re-opened, its decaying contents now the subject of preservation and examination.

In recent years that the ‘memory boom’ surrounding the First World War has been reconfigured to include the forgotten experience of civilians.²⁹ This historiographical trend, which began in the 1990s with the first studies into ‘culture(s) de guerre,’³⁰ eventually encompassed and revived the historical memory of the occupation. The first rigorous historical work was published in 1979 by Robert Vandenbussche,³¹ but Becker and her students have been at the forefront of such research – Becker herself has published two books, one volume of edited diaries, and numerous articles on the subject since 1990.³² Since 1986, she and others have also supervised dozens of *mémoires de maîtrise* on the occupation.³³ This was a specifically local historiography which is something of the past, with most historians in Paris now doing a Masters rather than *maîtrise*. My approach is somewhat different from Becker, who tends to highlight

²⁷ See, for example, the entirety of AN BB32/1-4, 300-301; AN F23/14, 373-78. The gaps may also contain relevant information, especially for AN BB32/5-299. Unfortunately, a comprehensive study of these files was not possible in the timeframe. See also: ‘Active Resistance’ chapter and Nivet, *France*, p.332-4.

²⁸ Antoine Redier, *Les Allemands dans nos maisons* (Paris, 1937), p.307.

²⁹ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (Michigan, 2006), p.6.

³⁰ Winter and Prost, *Great War*, p.159.

³¹ Robert Vandenbussche, ‘Le pouvoir municipal à Douai sous l’occupation (1914-1918),’ *Revue du Nord*, 61:241 (April-June 1979).

³² Becker, *Oubliés; Cicatrices; D’une guerre; Mémoire*; idem, ‘Introduction,’ *Revue du Nord*, 80: 325 (April-June 1998), pp.251-4; idem (ed.), *Journaux de combattants et de civils de la France du Nord dans la Grande Guerre* (Lille, 1998).

³³ Eric Bukowski, ‘Cambrai: une ville du Nord occupée lors de la Première Guerre mondiale,’ mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de B. Ménager (Lille III, 1986). For other theses, see bibliography.

suffering and patriotism as the most common, central experience,³⁴ which implies that she largely buys into the occupied world-view. I look at the different responses to the occupation, of which patriotism is but one end of a complex spectrum, but avoid interpreting these in moralistic terms. I study the understandings and cultures of the time, separating them from my own analysis and judgement.

The revival of the occupation (not exclusively that of the Nord) as a legitimate subject was arguably cemented by a special issue of the *Revue du Nord* dedicated to this subject in 1998 – the year of the publication of Becker’s first occupation-related book.³⁵ Since 1945, other published works have dealt with the wider occupation, but these were few and far between until the 1990s³⁶ – especially concerning the Nord, where the occupation experience was only documented briefly in local histories, and even they only appeared from the 1970s onwards, mainly written by two authors.³⁷ The most recent work, by Philippe Nivet, focuses on the entire occupied area.³⁸ There was therefore a gap of at least 25 years during which the occupation of northern France of 1914-18 was studied only rarely by French and British/Anglophone historians. History and memory

³⁴ See Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.111, or the repeated use of ‘la déportation des jeunes filles,’ *passim*.

³⁵ *Revue du Nord*, 80: 325 (April-June 1998).

³⁶ For pre-1990 works dealing with the occupation in some form, see Marc Blancpain, *Quand Guillaume II gouvernait “de la Somme aux Vosges”* (Paris, 1980); Thébaud, *Femme*; Carlos Bocquet, *Lille pendant la guerre 14-18* (Belgium, 1980); Cobb, *French and Germans*; Robert Vandenbussche, ‘Le pouvoir municipal à Douai sous l’occupation (1914-1918),’ *Revue du Nord*, 61:241 (April-June 1979), pp.445-474. For post-1990 works, see: Becker’s publications; Allender, *Survivre*; Chantal Antier, Marianne Walle, and Olivier Lahaie, *Les espionnes dans la Grande Guerre* (Rennes, 2008); Auriol, *Ténèbres*; Hugh Clout, *After the Ruins: Restoring the Countryside of Northern France after the Great War* (Exeter, 1996); Pierre Cottel, *Un village du Nord sous l’occupation allemande durant la première guerre mondiale: de 1910 à 1939, Wallers d’une guerre à l’autre* (Waller, 2000); Darrow, *French Women*; René Deruyk, *La mort pour la liberté: histoire du Comité Jacquet* (Lille, 1993); *idem*, *Louise de Bettignies, résistante lilloise* (1880-1918) (Lille, 1998); Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford, 2007); Jean-Yves Le Naour, *Misères et tourments de la chair durant la Grande Guerre: les mœurs sexuelles des Français, 1914-1918* (Paris, 2002); McPhail, *Silence*; Tammy M. Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (New York, 2010); *idem*, *Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War* (New York, 2003); Patrice Rossez, *Mémoire en Images: Lille – Tome I to Tome IV* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire, 2002-4); Trévisi and Nivet, *Les femmes*; Wallart, *Nord*.

³⁷ See Louis Trenard (ed.), *L’histoire de Cambrai* (Lille, 1970); Louis Trenard and Yves-Marie Hilaire (eds.), *Histoire de Lille: du XIX^e siècle au seuil du XXI^e siècle* (Lille, 1999); Yves-Marie Hilaire (ed.), *Histoire de Roubaix* (Dunkirk, 1984); Alain Lottin (ed.), *Histoire de Tourcoing* (Dunkerque, 1986).

³⁸ Nivet, *France*.

are not one and the same, but neither historians nor the local populations cultivated this memory after 1940. This thesis is part of the trend shedding light once more onto this dark period, focusing on one department in particular.

The Specificity of the Nord

Why the Nord? Firstly, it was the most populous occupied department, with a wartime population of 1,176,000, according to German census data.³⁹ This provided a large source base and also meant that a study of this department would reflect the experience of the vast majority of occupied French people, most of whom lived in the Nord. The results of the study are therefore instructive and representative, whilst also remaining part of a local specificity.

Secondly, the Nord is a manageable area close to important towns, and their archives. Also, limiting the study geographically allowed for a fuller understanding of material concerning this area. Maximum time could be spent in the most important archives, allowing an in-depth picture of occupied life to emerge. This is one of the major advantages of regional studies.

Thirdly, the Nord has intriguing regional specificities. It is at its heart a borderland, with the north-westerly coastal frontier of the North Sea set against the Belgian border running along the entire eastern limits of the department. Along with its sister department, the Pas-de-Calais, it was 'set apart from the rest of France [looking] northward, towards Belgium and the Netherlands, rather than to the south.'⁴⁰ The Nord had been a 'corridor for invasion'⁴¹ – there had been much territorial shifting since the Middle Ages, depending on the results of the most recent war. In particular, the area was

³⁹ Isabelle Molina, 'Les femmes dans le Nord occupé pendant la première Guerre Mondiale,' mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de R. Vandenbussche (Lille III, 1999), p.3. It is unclear when this census was conducted.

⁴⁰ Lynne Taylor, *Between Resistance and Collaboration: Popular Protest in Northern France, 1940-5* (London, 1999), p.7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

contested between France and the Spanish-Austrian Netherlands, attaining a semblance of a fixed border in the treaty of Utrecht in 1713.⁴² Prior to this, 'the region had been affiliated with the Dukes of Burgundy to the north and considered itself Flemish.'⁴³ The 1713 border remained relatively stable throughout the eighteenth century until the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, when France's territory extended eastwards. It was only after the 1820 treaty of Courtrai that the Franco-Belgian border started to crystallise, although even then it remained relatively fluid, with local inhabitants crossing it at will.⁴⁴ Indeed, Lynne Taylor argues that 'the Franco-Belgian border is a political artifice. The social, cultural and economic trade between the French and the Belgian communities along the border largely ignores the border's existence.'⁴⁵

There was considerable population movement, but it was mainly one-way: 230,000 Belgians lived in the Nord by 1900, and 35,000 others had become naturalised Frenchmen; yet more engaged in seasonal or daily migration in order to work in French factories.⁴⁶ In 1911, 91% of foreigners in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais were Belgian. There was still a degree of xenophobia directed towards these immigrants, although this would not reach its apogee until the inter-war period.⁴⁷ One result was linguistic diversity – there was a significant population with Flemish as its mother tongue located by the north-eastern border regions of the department, in the arrondissements of Dunkirk and Hazebrouck. This was despite the fact that French had made considerable progress from the late-nineteenth century due to Third Republic policies requiring French as the language of instruction in schools and the military, as well as the banning of Flemish as the language of catechism in 1890. Many communes in the Nord ignored this latter law, and cultural-linguistic institutions like the *Comité flamand de France*

⁴² Timothy Baycroft, 'Changing Identities in the Franco-Belgian Borderland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' *French History*, 13:4 (1999), p.419.

⁴³ Taylor, *Between*, p.7.

⁴⁴ Baycroft, 'Changing,' p.419-21.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Between*, p.7.

⁴⁶ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.29. This is the only study of the Nord on a regional-departmental level, and as such this section inevitably relies heavily on it – more so than the author would like.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.30-2.

combated linguistic hegemony whilst affirming their loyalty to the nation.⁴⁸ Overall, the Flemish population remained staunchly pro-France.⁴⁹ Yet these issues remained, for the most part, confined to what would later become the unoccupied Nord.

The department was primarily urban: by 1914, 71% of the population lived in agglomerations of 2,000 or more, compared to a national average of 56%.⁵⁰ Indeed, in 1911 French Flanders was the most densely populated area in France, with 967.5 inhabitants per square kilometer.⁵¹ That same year the industrial-urban triangle of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing had a population of over 600,000 – which would have been the second largest French agglomeration outside of Paris, had the municipalities been unified.⁵² The large, urban population of this triangle was the result of increased industrialisation since the mid-nineteenth century – also the reason for the large influx of Belgian workers.⁵³ Heavy industry, mainly the production of cast iron and steelwork, was important and was fuelled by the department's coal mines and those of neighbouring Pas-de-Calais.⁵⁴ Heavy industry employed over 15,000 people in the Nord; 10,000 of whom worked in Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing.⁵⁵ It was a large operation: in 1913, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region produced 17.9% of France's cast iron, and 31.4% of her steel. World-famous firms such as the *Compagnie de Fives-Lille* built railway bridges and steel frameworks for railway stations all over the world, such as the *Gare d'Orsay*, and bridges in Romania, Spain, and Egypt.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.35-6; Timothy Baycroft, *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Woodbridge, 2004), p.153.

⁴⁹ Baycroft, *Culture*, p.43-4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.83.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.84.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁵³ Baycroft, *Culture*, p.65-70.

⁵⁴ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.65-7; Hervé Lozingot, 'Mineurs et métallurgistes dans le Nord et le Pas-de-Calais durant la Première Guerre mondiale,' diplôme d'études approfondies sous la direction d'Odette Hardy-Hemery (Lille III, 1990).

⁵⁵ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.68-9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.68.

But the backbone of *Nordiste* industry was textile manufacturing. Nearly 40% of French cotton, 85-90% of linen, 40% of wool and 30% of cloth was produced here.⁵⁷ Roubaix was the world leader in cloth production.⁵⁸ The textile industry employed about 225,000 people, many of whom were women working in semi-skilled jobs, aided by technological advances. Often factories were run by paternalistic men hailing from large industrial families. Such industrial dynasties represented a new form of notability, with leading factory-owners playing a role in local politics,⁵⁹ such as Charles Delesalle, mayor of Lille during the occupation.⁶⁰

The success of heavy industry and textile manufacturing led to a diffusion of other industries. The first glassworks in France was established near Douai and Maubeuge, and the manufacture of cement and other building materials flourished.⁶¹ Not all sectors prospered, though, and the Nord was noticeably handicapped by the slow development of chemical manufacturing (a leading industry in the early twentieth century), and its outdated canal network.⁶²

Agriculture was another boon to the department. Its flat plains represented 'one of the richest agricultural areas of France' and had been 'intensely cultivated for centuries. The soil is good, and cereals, tubers such as potatoes, beets and turnip, fodder crops and industrial crops, such as flax, chicory, tobacco and sugar beets' were all grown here.⁶³ Sugar beet production in particular reflected the area's dominance in this sector: in 1913, 'la plus importante sucrerie du monde' was located in Escaudoeuvres, near Cambrai.⁶⁴ Intensive farming extended beyond sugar beet, and the Nord-Pas-de-Calais had the highest wheat productivity of Europe, especially in le Cambr sis in the Nord, where

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.70.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.72-3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.134.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.78-9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.80-3.

⁶³ Taylor, *Between*, p.7-8.

⁶⁴ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.62.

production surpassed 35 quintals per hectare in 1910.⁶⁵ Such intensive agriculture allowed for densely-populated rural areas to exist.⁶⁶ In total, the region of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais provided 8% of France's wheat production, 12% of apples, and 30% of sugar, despite the fact that the land constituted just 2.2% of French territory and its inhabitants only 7% of the population.⁶⁷

Highly urbanised areas experienced great social inequality:⁶⁸ the 'classes dirigeantes' possessed the vast majority of the economic fortune, rendering the middle classes rather weak, and the 'classes populaires' very poor. This was exacerbated by housing for workers that had been rapidly created, was cramped and provided a very poor sanitary environment. Infant mortality was high until 1900, after which mild improvements were visible. The lot of the working classes was made even harder when faced with below-average levels of education: the number of men possessing a 'diplôme supérieur au certificat d'étude' (thus having experienced education beyond the age of 13) was 7.7%, the number of women 6%, compared to a national average of 10.4% and 8.5% respectively.⁶⁹

The working class represented about 60% of the population of cities like Lille,⁷⁰ and this shaped the political culture: 'Dans la région du Nord, aux paysages économiques très marqués et aux statuts sociaux fort inégaux, les comportements politiques avaient toujours pris une forte tonalité sociale.'⁷¹ Social inequality encouraged workers to support socialism, which worried the 'catégories sociales aisées.'⁷² Belgian socialism

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.61.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁶⁸ See Félix-Paul Codaccioni, *De l'inégalité sociale dans une grande ville industrielle: Le drame de Lille de 1850 à 1914* (Lille, 1976).

⁶⁹ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.99-103.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.159.

⁷² *Ibid.*

greatly influenced the workers of the Nord.⁷³ Syndicalist groups bloomed, and those taking a socialist bent had over 100,000 members.⁷⁴ Indeed, the Nord was a ‘hotbed for socialist and syndicalist activities, particularly in the densely populated, working-class Lille urban area.’⁷⁵ *Roubaisien* Jules Guesde and his ideology dominated the socialist movement, although leftists were divided until the creation of the SFIO in 1905, after which date the *Fédération du Nord* was the second largest in the party, with 11,000 adherents.⁷⁶ Socialist victories in Roubaix in 1892 and Lille in 1896 demonstrated the ‘threat’ of socialism, and were subsequently met with a ‘réconquête “libérale”’ in Roubaix in 1901 by Eugène Motte and in Lille in 1904 by Charles Delesalle.⁷⁷ By 1914 the SFIO had 14 deputies in the region, especially around Lille and Valenciennes – progress was slow, despite seemingly widespread support, but nevertheless ‘Le Nord constitue indéniablement un des bastions du socialisme français.’⁷⁸ (See Fig. 1 for an electoral map of the Nord).

Certain segments of the *bourgeoisie* and peasants were mainly concerned with the defence of property – leading rural areas such as le Cambrésis to become bastions of centralism.⁷⁹ The Radicals, on the other hand, comprised an important political force: the mayors of Tourcoing, Roubaix and Cambrai in the early twentieth century were all Radicals, although this label was notoriously slippery.⁸⁰ They were seen as arbiters of the left-right dispute, hailing from complex origins (whether industrial or agricultural) and represented the moderate left. Concerned with maintaining a certain status quo, they nevertheless remained anticlerical and *laïque*, willing to ally with socialists or centrists,

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.37.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.159 and 171.

⁷⁵ Baycroft, *Culture*, p.139.

⁷⁶ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.170.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.162.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.171 and 168.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.159.

⁸⁰ Donald G. Wileman, ‘Not the Radical Republic: Liberal Ideology and Central Blandishment in France, 1901-1914,’ *The Historical Journal*, 37:3 (September 1994), pp.593-614; Robert Gildea, *France 1870-1914* (London, 1996), pp.60-70; James F. McMillan, *Twentieth Century France: Politics and Society, 1898-1991* (London, 1985), pp.13-15.

but never with Catholics.⁸¹ The latter – the Catholic, conservative right – ‘bénéficie encore d’une audience remarquable qui, bien que se réduisant peu à peu depuis 1900, lui permet de faire front.’ This was especially the case in rural areas, although its audience always remained greater than its actual parliamentary influence.⁸² Whatever their political leaning, members of the political class tended to be bourgeois: *négociants*, *commerçants*, entrepreneurs, industrialists, landlords. By combining economic and political influence, they essentially became the new ‘notables’ of the Nord.⁸³

Debates between left and right largely mirrored (and focused on) those between anticlericals and clericals. This was exacerbated and rendered more complex in the Nord because of its curious mix of socialist sentiment and fairly widespread Catholic piety. As a rule Catholicism flourished in rural areas but did less well in the cities,⁸⁴ although despite this generalisation, Lille remained ‘une capitale religieuse et l’un des pôles les plus dynamiques du catholicisme français.’⁸⁵ Many in the Nord had been unhappy with the 1905 separation of Church and State, with some religious communities consequently migrating to Belgium to seek refuge.⁸⁶ After 1905, there was a shift leftwards among certain constituencies towards accepting some aspects of anticlericalism, but Catholics remained divided over the best course of action: some supported the ideas of *l’abbé* Lemire, a *député*-priest willing to integrate as best as possible into the Third Republic; others remained monarchists and virulently anti-Republican.⁸⁷ Inbetween 1905 and 1914, there had been numerous clashes, both metaphorically and physically, between Catholics and the state (or supporters of its anticlerical policies).⁸⁸ By 1914, ‘les catholiques, persécutés par la législation anticléricale, luttent pour le maintien de la

⁸¹ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.165-7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.175.

⁸³ This also happened elsewhere: Philippe Hamman, *Les transformations de la notabilité entre France et Allemagne: L’industrie faïencière à Sarreguemines (1836-1918)* (Paris, 2005).

⁸⁴ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.136.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.138.

⁸⁶ Baycroft, ‘Changing,’ p.424.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.135.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.146-50.

liberté d'enseignement et réclament la proportionnelle scolaire.⁸⁹ This combat also took the form of Catholic leagues and movements, with youth movements attracting about 10,000 members in the Nord by 1913, especially in Flanders, Tourcoing and le Cambrésis.⁹⁰ Female Catholic leagues attracted massive numbers: in Cambrai in 1912, the *Ligue patriotique des Françaises* 'rassemble 73 823 ligueuses.'⁹¹ Despite increasingly common anticlericalism, the Nord therefore remained surprisingly Catholic given its demographic constituency.⁹² Yet whether Catholic or not, most *Nordistes* remained loyal to France, if not necessarily the Republic, which would have implications for their approach to occupation.

Among the Francophone population there also existed a regional patois,⁹³ a variation of the Picard dialect, named *ch'ti* after its speakers' pronunciation of soft 's' and 'c' sounds. Like most French *patois*, it was primarily spoken by the lower classes, playing a central role in the popular poems and songs of the region.⁹⁴ There were a few literary works, most notably the poems and *chansons populaires* of Auguste Labbé (alias César Latulupe),⁹⁵ who founded a society in 1906 charged with protecting the patois of Lille.⁹⁶

Some of these specificities of the Nord coalesced to aid the development of a local identity and culture. *Nordistes* seized any opportunity for public gatherings and celebrations, whether watching puppet shows conducted in the local dialect, carnival processions of the wooden *géants du Nord*, or engaging in Catholic celebrations of Joan

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.151.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.155.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.157.

⁹² See Carine Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise et la Foi dans le Nord durant la Grande Guerre,' mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction d'Annette Becker (Lille III, 1996).

⁹³ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.35.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.182.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* See also Auguste Labbé (alias César Latulupe), *A Molins-Lille, chanson-type en patois de Lille, par Auguste Labbé* (Lille, 1894) accessed online on 2nd August 2011 at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k57591162>

⁹⁶ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.183.

of Arc.⁹⁷ A strong worker culture meant that many passed much of their spare time in the numerous *estaminets* and *débits de boissons*. In Lille in 1910, there existed an enormous 3,900 *estaminets*.⁹⁸ Outside of drinking holes, workers turned to music for leisure: the *Fédération des musiques du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais* had 50,000 members in 1912. Pigeon-fancying provided a popular outdoor activity, with at least 20,000 *colombophiles* subscribed to the regional federation in 1908.⁹⁹

These regional specificities, cultures and identities could react in interesting and different ways to the German presence. Yet what was the overall experience of occupation? This context is needed before a deeper examination of the key themes outlined can take place.

The Occupation in Context

From the outbreak of war until September 1914, German troops marched through Belgium and northern France in an execution of the Moltke-Schlieffen Plan.¹⁰⁰ Although the invasion was stopped in its tracks by the Battle of the Marne on 5-12th September,¹⁰¹ the front still shifted until October-November. This invasion period was characterised across northern France and Belgium by ruthless German policies and atrocities, both real and imagined, including rape, pillage, mass executions, and the use of civilians as human shields.¹⁰² Such atrocities were reported in the Allied press. An article of *The Times* of 22nd September 1914 chronicled the shooting of one Abbé Délébecque, ‘falsely arraigned as a spy’ because he was carrying letters from French soldiers to their families. He was the seventh priest in the diocese of Cambrai shot by the Germans.¹⁰³ Another article reports details of the Germans burning down houses and killing civilians

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.181-2, 126-31.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.125.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.126.

¹⁰⁰ Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Practices and the Culture of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2005), p.160-71.

¹⁰¹ John Keegan, *The First World War* (London, 1998), pp.81-148.

¹⁰² Smith et al., *France*, p.44; Hull, *Absolute*, p.215.

¹⁰³ *The Times* (22nd September 1914).

in Douai.¹⁰⁴ After the invasion, German actions would be investigated by Allied powers, most notably by the British Bryce Report.¹⁰⁵ John Horne and Alan Kramer have demonstrated that such atrocities, dismissed as overblown propaganda after the war, were in fact widespread, and based on the false German belief that the population was comprised of *francs-tireurs* waging a guerrilla war, just as in 1870-1.¹⁰⁶

As Belgians fled to the Nord, the local populations became aware of atrocities.¹⁰⁷ In the Nord itself, one of the most infamous German acts involved the burning village of Orchies after German soldiers alleged that they had been fired on by *francs-tireurs*.¹⁰⁸ The terror of the invasion period would have lasting consequences for the *culture de l'occupé*, and illustrates that the Germans had their own *culture de guerre*.

Until October 1914, *Nordistes* had hoped that an Allied counter-attack would push the Germans out of the department, but the initial German race to Paris had created a period of limbo. Lille had been declared a 'ville ouverte' on 1st August 1914, meaning that despite the presence of a fortress and garrison, the city would not be defended. On 24th August 1914, the French military left, along with some members of the civilian administration – a move that some denounced as abandonment.¹⁰⁹ From this date until the beginning of October, Lille was neither occupied by the Allies, nor the Germans. The inhabitants had their first encounter with the Germans when a scouting party entered the town on 2nd September and occupied the *hôtel de ville*.¹¹⁰ During this brief incursion,

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 8th October 1914.

¹⁰⁵ Committee on Alleged German Outrages, *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages appointed by His Britannic Majesty's Government and presided over by The Right Hon. Viscount Bryce, O.M., &c., &c. Formerly British Ambassador at Washington* (London, 1915). For more on this, see John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (London, 2001).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, especially p.419.

¹⁰⁷ Wallart, *Nord*, p.15.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.13; ADN 9R716: German poster, Valenciennes, 27th September 1914; ADN 9R714: secrétaire de la mairie d'Orchies réfugié à Lille to acting Préfet du Nord Anjubault, 3rd February 1916.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Trochon, *La Grande Guerre (1914-1918): Lille avant et pendant l'occupation allemande* (Tourcoing, 1922), p.17-18.

¹¹⁰ Wallart, *Nord*, p.15.

the first of many clashes between French and German authorities occurred when one Lieutenant von Hoffel physically assaulted the *Préfet du Nord*, who had been blamed for having ordered men of military age to leave Lille for the French front.¹¹¹

Lille was reoccupied by French troops on 3rd October. For the next ten days, clashes took place between French and German troops within the city's limits as the Germans laid siege. On 13th October 1914, after 1,500 houses and 882 other buildings had been destroyed by artillery fire, the defending French forces capitulated.¹¹²

70% of the department was in German hands by mid-October 1914. At this time the Germans occupied part or all of ten French departments¹¹³ (see Fig. 2) – about 3.7% of French territory and 8.2% of her population,¹¹⁴ over two million people.¹¹⁵ Thus after the invasion ‘came the extended static period, the occupation proper.’¹¹⁶ Trench warfare ensured that the front would remain relatively stable for four years, meaning that these areas remained under German dominance until October-November 1918, depending on the specific locality. Lille, for example, was liberated on 17th October 1918,¹¹⁷ whereas inhabitants of Avesnes had to wait until 7th November 1918 for their deliverance.¹¹⁸

The way in which the Germans administered the Nord was similar to policies used in other occupied French departments, all of which were considered as front-line areas

¹¹¹ M. Cliquennois-Pâque, *Lille Martyre: Proclamations, Arrêtés et Ordonnances du Gouvernement allemand, Arrêtés municipaux, Protestations des autorités françaises, Extraits des journaux allemands, etc., etc. Notes et souvenirs du bombardement et de l'occupation recueillis au jour le jour. Préface par M. Georges Lyon, Recteur de l'Université de Lille* (Lille, 1919), pp.32-7; Richard, ‘Le préfet,’ p.56; Trochon, *Lille*, p.50-1.

¹¹² Wallart, *Nord*, p.15.

¹¹³ Becker, *Cicatrices*. The departments were the Aisne, Ardennes, Marne, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse, Nord, Oise, Pas-de-Calais, Somme, and Vosges.

¹¹⁴ Nivet, *France*, p.9.

¹¹⁵ Georges Gromaire, *L'Occupation allemande en France, 1914-1918* (Paris, 1925), p.193. Gromaire estimates a population of 2,125,000 in occupied France in late 1914.

¹¹⁶ Smith et al., *France*, p.44.

¹¹⁷ Wallart, *Nord*, p.67.

¹¹⁸ Hilaire, *Histoire*, p.223.

(*Etappen*) by the Germans, as opposed to the *General-Government* pseudo-civilian rule existing in most of Belgium.¹¹⁹ Occupied France was thus under military rule. A general administrative framework existed: next to each commanding general of one of the seven army groups in occupied France was an *Etappeninspektor*, charged with liaising between the interior and the fighting troops, providing the latter with food, accommodation, and transport. Below him was an *Etappenkommandant*, a high-ranking officer representing the highest authority to which French people could appeal, and whose powers were likened to that of a ‘little king.’¹²⁰ Each *Kommandant* and his *Kommandantur* controlled from one to forty French communes, and possessed wide-ranging personnel, with its own administrative staff initially composed of soldiers, but later of German civilians, including female secretaries. The *Kommandant* rarely lasted for the duration of the occupation, reassigned to different sectors or fronts. Economic committees (*Beutesammelstellen*) working alongside the *Etappeninspektor* had the goal of best procuring the resources of the occupied territory, mainly through requisitions – these were replaced from 1916 by *Wirtschaftskompanien*. Three police forces existed: the German gendarmes, sometimes including *Landsturm* (reserve troops made up of old men); a military police formed of soldiers exempt from front-line service; and the secret police, involved in counter-espionage.¹²¹ The French population frequently had to lodge troops on their way to the front, often feeding them and doing their washing.¹²² As such, there were two types of German soldier in the occupied region: members of the army of occupation, and soldiers from the fighting army, temporarily encountering the French whether en route to the front, or on leave from the front.

¹¹⁹ Xavier Rousseaux and Laurence van Ypersele (eds.), *La Patrie crie vengeance! La Répression des “inciviques” belges au sortir de la guerre 1914-1918* (Brussels, 2008), p.24-5. The extreme west of Belgium was, however, an *Etappe* – Madeleine Havard de le Montagne, *La vie agonisante des pays occupés: Lille et la Belgique, Notes d’un Témoin, Octobre 1914-Juillet 1916* (Paris, 1918), p.85.

¹²⁰ Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.385; L. Pauly, *Occupation allemande et Guerre totale: Étude de l’Évolution du Régime des Personnes et des Biens d’après l’expérience de la dernière guerre* (Nancy, 1930), p.20.

¹²¹ Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.41-56. For more on the German administrative structure, see Nivet, *France*, p.38-41; Xavier Desoblin, ‘Les paysans dans la Grande Guerre: essai d’enquête sur le Nord-Pas-de-Calais,’ mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction d’Annette Becker (Lille III, 1999).

¹²² Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.52; Nivet, *France*, p.27-32.

The French administration was sidelined at all but municipal level. No departmental assemblies met during the occupation. The Germans nominated *Sous-Préfets* such as those of Avesnes and Cambrai, and mayors like that of Etroeungt. Whilst the Prefect was still present – until his deportation in 1915 and replacement with the *Sous-Préfet d'Avesnes*¹²³ – his role was never more than consultative. The Germans dealt with the mayors and municipal councillors of French communes, using them as middle-men to fulfil German orders and communicate such demands to the local populations. In many ways, this meant that municipalities found themselves ‘entre le marteau et l’enclume,’ as Sébastien Debarge puts it.¹²⁴ The French police and judicial system was still permitted to operate, but its powers had been greatly curbed (see the ‘Criminality’ chapter), and ultimately the Germans remained dominant in all spheres of life.

The occupied region was cut off from the rest of the world – Herbert Hoover described occupied France and Belgium as a ‘vast concentration camp.’¹²⁵ The Germans ‘needed the occupied population’ and did their ‘best to keep them there,’ such as erecting a 30km-long electric fence along the Belgian-Dutch border,¹²⁶ and posting sentries along the Franco-Belgian border, making these territories into ‘vast prisons for their inhabitants.’¹²⁷ Correspondence between communes was forbidden for all but civil servants, and contact with the outside world was illegal and difficult.¹²⁸ Public circulation was limited to specific times unless a pass could be presented, and permission was required to move between communes – permission which few outside of French authorities were granted.¹²⁹ French civilians were ordered to kill their carrier pigeons to prevent communication with the Allies, a measure particularly resented by the

¹²³ Wallart, *Nord*, p.31.

¹²⁴ Sébastien Debarge, ‘Fourmies occupée pendant la Grande Guerre,’ *Revue du Nord*, 80: 325 (April-June 1998), p.292.

¹²⁵ Cited in McPhail, *Silence*, p.55.

¹²⁶ Kramer, *Dynamic*, p.42.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.44.

¹²⁸ ADN 9R792: poster for France and Belgium explaining the rules for sending letters, 3rd April 1917. For illegal correspondence, see the ‘Active Resistance’ chapter.

¹²⁹ See, for example, ADN 9R756: German poster, Valenciennes, 7th November 1914.

colombophiles.¹³⁰ The French press was forbidden, apart from publications approved and edited by the Germans, such as the occupation-wide *Gazette des Ardennes*, or the local *Bulletin de Lille* and *Bulletin de Roubaix*.¹³¹ Freedom of expression was thus curbed, especially anti-German sentiment.¹³² Such policies led to a feeling of acute isolation among *Nordistes*, as among the population of the entire occupied area.¹³³

Almost every aspect of life was regulated by the Germans, via manifold ‘mesures vexatoires’,¹³⁴ from public hygiene measures¹³⁵ to the imposition of German time (an hour ahead of French time), which was enforced with spot-checks; if an *occupé* was asked the time and provided French time, a punishment would be administered.¹³⁶ Some have seen this and other policies – such as the banning in some schools of the French history syllabus, the replacement of street names with German ones, or the raising of German flags in public places – as representative of a ‘Germanisation.’¹³⁷ Others disagree.¹³⁸ It can be argued that such policies were more short-term markers of dominance – indeed, the overwhelming official German attitude appeared to involve disdain and cultural superiority¹³⁹ – never constituting a concerted effort to eradicate Frenchness. The occupation was a means to an end, not an end in itself

¹³⁰ ADN 9R557: Prefect to mayors of Nord, 16th October 1914; ADN 74J225: Journal de M. Blin, instituteur en retraite at Auchy-les-Orchies (1914-1918), 11th December 1914.

¹³¹ Wallart, *Nord*, p.31; Nivet, *France*, p.78; L’Abbé Auguste Leman (Professeur aux Facultés catholiques de Lille), *Pages actuelles, 1914-1919: Lille sous l’occupation allemande: les héros du journalisme* (Paris, 1919), p.4-7.

¹³² ADN 9R717: German poster, 12th February 1916, forbidding ‘écrits hostiles à l’Allemagne.’

¹³³ Marc Blancpain, *Quand Guillaume*, p.120; Trochon, *Lille*, p.3; Nivet, *France*, p.15-34.

¹³⁴ Nivet, *France*, p.124-7.

¹³⁵ See, for example, AMT H4A25, and ADN 9R748: German poster, Tourcoing, 9th January 1918; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.174; Marie-Hélène Benoît, ‘L’état sanitaire de la population civile du Nord envahi pendant la Première Guerre mondiale: Lille en particulier (1914-1918),’ mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction d’Annette Becker (Lille III, 1997), p.109-11.

¹³⁶ De le Montagne, *La vie agonisante*, p.218.

¹³⁷ Nivet, *France*, pp.55-84; Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.23.

¹³⁸ J. P. Whitaker, *Under the Heel of the Hun. (An Englishman’s two-and-a-half years in Roubaix and Lille)* (London, 1917), p.31-2.

¹³⁹ See AML 4H60 for translations of the German occupation paper *Liller Kriegszeitung* and the edited collection *Lille in Deutscher Hand*. For the original version, see <http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/helios/digi/feldzeitungen.html> (accessed online 20th January 2012).

Whatever the logic behind them, rules and regulations flooded the occupied Nord, as elsewhere. The distinction between public and private spheres was weakened, particularly by policies requiring the *occupés* to keep doors to houses open at night in case of bombardment, and the obligation to affix a regularly-updated list of occupants to the front entrance of all properties.¹⁴⁰ The possession of a photographic identity card was compulsory in Lille from September 1915, slightly later elsewhere.¹⁴¹ Thousands of posters informed the population of these rules, as well as the punishments for any infractions¹⁴² – often inevitable. As Marc Blancpain wrote, ‘Les “avis”, “ordonnances” et “ordres” du commandement des étapes et des commandements locales sont si nombreuses que “la faute est devenue la règle.”’¹⁴³ An Englishman’s account of life in occupied Roubaix professed similar views: ‘I do not believe that anyone took a vicious delight in disobeying these commands, but they were so many and so varied that if one were not very careful indeed one was sure to find oneself at cross-purposes with the authorities.’¹⁴⁴ Punishment could involve fines, imprisonment, or even death, depending on the infraction.¹⁴⁵ The extent and nature of punishment can be seen in the condemnations published in the *Bulletin de Lille*. From 1914 until July 1918, 658 people were condemned to a total of 246 years, 11 months and eight days of *détention simple*; 115 people to a total of 3 years, five months and one day of *détention moyenne*; and 34 people to a total of 267 years and seven months of *travaux forcés*. Fines were frequent: 85 people were sentenced to ‘87.118’ Marks of ‘amendes simples’; whilst 78 people faced 37 years, four months and 24 days’ imprisonment with a fine of 1,000 francs, plus a fine of ‘161.920’ Marks and five years, eight months and 25 days’

¹⁴⁰ Such a measure was enforced in Lille from September 1915: Becker, *Journaux*, diary of Maria Degnitère, 3rd September 1915, p.185.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3rd February 1916, p.193-4; Michelin’s Illustrated Guide to the Battlefields (1914-1918), *Lille Before and During the War* (London, 1919), p.12; Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.77.

¹⁴² For an overview of both German rules and punishments for infractions, see Cliquennois-Pâque, *Lille*; posters in ADN 9R702-775; AMT H4A26; McPhail, *Silence*, pp.91-115; Nivet, *France*, p.125-7; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.124-30.

¹⁴³ Blancpain, *Quand Guillaume*, p.120.

¹⁴⁴ Whitaker, *Under the Heel*, p.53.

¹⁴⁵ See the posters referenced above.

imprisonment. 21 were condemned to death, and three to 30 years' *réclusion*.¹⁴⁶ In addition, there were numerous less-formal punishments. These demonstrate German attempts to subjugate the population, part of what some have labeled the 'régime de terreur' or German 'terrorisation' of the local population.¹⁴⁷

French economic life effectively came to a standstill during the occupation. This was partly due to restrictions on freedom of movement and communication preventing trade beyond the communal limits. Combined with German prescriptions relating to import and export of goods and materials, this led to what Georges Gromaire called 'le commerce paralysé'.¹⁴⁸ A large percentage of the workforce was mobilised or fled the invasion, thus the majority of the population of occupied France and the Nord was female.¹⁴⁹ Further, the Germans requisitioned goods and buildings from private individuals, agriculture, and industry alike, as well as requisitions of *occupés* themselves, who were forced to work for the German authority.¹⁵⁰ Inhabitants were required to declare a variety of material due for requisitioning (even underwear),¹⁵¹ although many did not – the Germans knew this so carried out widespread searches, punishing individuals found to be in breach of the regulations, and blurring the distinction between pillage and genuine requisitions.¹⁵² *Occupés* at the time, and various French people afterwards described German acts as 'pillage systématique,' an attempt to destroy the economy of the occupied region both to win the war, and to hinder post-war

¹⁴⁶ AML 4H68: Relevé des Condamnations prononcées par la Justice Allemande, à Lille et figurant au Bulletin de Lille du n°1 au n°385^{bis} (14 Juillet 1918).

¹⁴⁷ See Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.12, 254; idem, 'Les occupations,' in Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *Encyclopédie*, p.795; Nivet, *France*, p.364; Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.44; Leman, *Pages actuelles*, p.21.

¹⁴⁸ Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.80-5.

¹⁴⁹ Nivet, 'Femmes,' p.275. In Lille, roughly two-thirds of the population were female in February 1916 (101,876 women and 53,984 men) – AML 4H203: Résultat du recensement du 9 au 10 février 1916.

¹⁵⁰ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.168-190.

¹⁵¹ ADN 9R745: German poster, Tourcoing, 24th September 1915; McPhail *Silence*, p.91-94; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.159-168.

¹⁵² See, for example, *BdL*, n°174 (13th July 1916); Nivet, *France*, p.85-96.

development.¹⁵³ Whatever the case, the effects of these policies on the wartime economy were clear: unemployment was widespread, with large towns of the Nord awarding *secours de chômage* to up to 43.02% of the population,¹⁵⁴ leading to a lack of income which could be pumped back into the local economy.

Finances were strained further by the fact that *occupés* were required to pay numerous taxes, on an individual and municipal/communal level. Some counted as 'war contributions' to pay for the upkeep of occupation troops, legal under article 49 of the 1907 Hague Convention.¹⁵⁵ Others were fines levied on communes for alleged bad behaviour of inhabitants, the French administration, or even simply because of Allied attacks elsewhere – as was the case when Valenciennes and Roubaix were fined in response to the Allied bombing of Alexandria and Haïfa in June 1915.¹⁵⁶ The sums demanded were enormous – for instance, by the end of the war the administration of Croix had paid taxes of 1,100,000 francs, war contributions of 8,339,66.68 francs, and fines of 2,030 francs.¹⁵⁷ Taxes and contributions usually forced municipal councillors and clergymen to appeal to wealthy compatriots to help fill the gaps in the

¹⁵³ Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.80, p.162, pp.394-422; M.L. Baclé (vice-président de la société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale), *La destruction systématique par les Allemands des usines métallurgiques du Nord et de l'Est de la France pendant l'occupation militaire (1914-1918)* (Paris, 1920); Pauly, *Occupation*.

¹⁵⁴ Christel Ramirez, 'Les villes et les campagnes dans le Nord pendant l'occupation allemande de 1914-1918,' mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction d'Annette Becker (Lille III, 1999), p.136-7. See also ADN J1933: Manuscrit de François Rouesel, 'Pendant la C.C.I [Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie] de Roubaix durant l'occupation allemande,' 'La Caisse du Chômage'; Trochon, *Lille*, p.109-11. For a comparative study of Belgium, see Fernand Passelecq, *Unemployment in Belgium during the German Occupation and its General Causes* (London, 1917).

¹⁵⁵ AML 4H134: German poster, Lille, 6th December 1917; Nivet, *France*, p.107-114; Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907. Annexe to the Convention, section III, article 1. Accessed online on 1st December 2009 at <http://www.icrc.org/IHL.NSF/FULL/195?OpenDocument>

¹⁵⁶ ADN 9R730: Kommandant Hofmann to la Mairie de Roubaix, 20th June 1915.

¹⁵⁷ ADN 9R1244: mayor of Croix to mayor of Lille, 9th December 1918.

administration's coffers.¹⁵⁸ Individual taxes included the infamous dog tax, failure to pay resulting in the destruction of the dog.¹⁵⁹

The Germans requisitioned gold and francs, and introduced paper money. These were the *bons de villes*, *bons communaux* and *bons de monnaie*, issued grudgingly by the communes because of their illegality – French law only permitted the creation of such currency with the approval of central government. These *bons* effectively constituted 'IOUs,' listing sums which would be repaid after the cessation of hostilities.¹⁶⁰ Such money could not be used to pay German taxes and fines, which therefore meant the depletion of any existing gold or franc stocks. Also, the circulation of essentially worthless paper money undermined economic stability and confidence, exacerbating the widespread penury of the occupied population.

Food was a primary concern for the *occupés*, representing the strongest recurring theme in occupation diaries,¹⁶¹ because a near-famine developed as the occupation went on. This was due to German requisitions of foodstuffs and appropriation of agricultural land, extracting local resources to serve the German war effort, as well as aforementioned restrictions on movement and trade. As food became rarer, inflation grew rapidly, aggravating the situation. The population's health subsequently declined: diseases such as scurvy became common,¹⁶² and malnutrition was widespread, which some suggest was

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, AML 4H4: Lettre de Mgr l'évêque de Lille demandant à tous les fidèles de sa ville épiscopale de concourir au paiement de la contribution de guerre, 18th November 1914; and poster, mayor of Lille, 15th November 1914.

¹⁵⁹ Eugène Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans avec les barbares: Lille pendant l'occupation allemande* (Paris, 1919), p.108-113. See also Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.168-9; Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 19th March 1916, p.196. This event marked local memory: see *Nord Éclair* and *Croix* (17th September 1968).

¹⁶⁰ Wallart, *Nord*, p.37; Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.174-81; ADN 9R1245-6 passim; ADN 9R1241: mayor of Lille to Prefect, 14th December 1918.

¹⁶¹ See, for example, ADN 142J4: Journal de P.P. Desrumaux sur l'occupation de Lille par les Allemands (1914-18); ADN 74J224: Journal de M. Trollin, directeur de l'école Rollin, Lille, 1914-1918; ADN 74J225: Blin diary; ADN J959: Journal de Joseph Noyelle, avocat, docteur en Droit, secrétaire du Syndicat des Peigneurs à Roubaix, 1905-1932; ADN J1933: Rouesel diary; ADN J1950: journal de guerre de Pierre Motte (1861-1947), notaire à Lille; Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère and David Hirsch diaries.

¹⁶² Benoît, 'L'état sanitaire,' p.39-40.

the reason for numerous women no longer menstruating¹⁶³ – thus for some, biological realities changed during the occupation.¹⁶⁴ Local administrations, but also French, Allied and neutral governments, and eventually even the Germans recognised the danger for the occupied population. As such, from April 1915, neutral aid organisations intervened to feed French and Belgian *occupés*. These were Herbert Hoover's Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), and its French subsidiary, the *Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France* (CANF), both sometimes referred to as *Hispano-américain* and later *Hispano-néerlandais* relief efforts.¹⁶⁵ Tens of thousands (or more) would have died were it not for these aid organisations,¹⁶⁶ although it was only with much deliberation that Britain allowed CRB-CANF transport ships to pass through the naval blockade.¹⁶⁷ Even with this aid, many experienced malnutrition, general poor physical health caused by further privations of gas and coal,¹⁶⁸ and mental health problems caused by the stress of occupation and the risk of bombardment.¹⁶⁹

Added to these sufferings was the threat of deportation. The line between evacuation and deportation is a blurred one for this occupation,¹⁷⁰ with the Germans engaging in the forcible removal of populations on a frequent basis during 1916 and early 1917. The Germans moved about 20,000 people – men, women and children – from Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing to the Ardennes in Easter 1916, allegedly 'pour atténuer la misère' of the

¹⁶³ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.272-3; Thébaud, *Femme*, p.53-4.

¹⁶⁴ Other *occupés* suffered from mental conditions, typhoid fever, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and tuberculosis. See Benoît, 'L'état sanitaire.'

¹⁶⁵ Gabrielle Yerta and Marguerite Yerta, *Six Women and the Invasion* (London, 1917), p.306.

¹⁶⁶ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.140. For more on the wider relief effort and the problem of hunger, see pp.131-58, and also McPhail, *Silence*, pp.61-90; Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, pp.187-206; Nivet, *France*, pp.150-77; Wallart, *Nord*, p.38-9; Vernon Kellog, *Headquarter Nights: A Record of Conversations and Experiences at the Headquarters of the German Army in France and Belgium* (Boston, 1917), pp.49-56.

¹⁶⁷ For Britain's role in and response to the relief effort, see, for example, NA CAB24/37: Memorandum: Belgium Relief (December 1917); NA CAB24/66 and 24/21: The Shipping situation of Relief Work for Belgium and occupied portion of France. Copy of letter from Director for Europe of the Commission for Relief in Belgium (22nd July 1917); British Parliamentary Archives: 1916 Commons Sitting – Prisoners of War. Relief in Belgium. HC Deb 10 August 1916 vol 85 cc1201-2. For more on the British naval blockade, see NA CAB/24/34: Summary of Blockade Information 23rd-29th November 1917.

¹⁶⁸ Nivet, *France*, p.177-85.

¹⁶⁹ See Benoît, 'L'état sanitaire.'

¹⁷⁰ Becker, *Oubliés*, p.61.

occupés which had been exacerbated by ‘L’attitude de l’Angleterre.’¹⁷¹ These were the most infamous deportations, and because of the presence of women they became known as the ‘enlèvement des jeunes filles’ across the occupied area.¹⁷² (There is some debate as to whether the primarily female nature of deportation was a reality or perception, although that such a perception should exist is significant). There was international outcry at German actions,¹⁷³ which may explain the apparent winding-down of deportations after January 1917 – although forced labour continued in one form or another.¹⁷⁴

However, population movement still occurred until the end of the war in two other forms. The first involved repatriations from the occupied area to unoccupied France.¹⁷⁵ Evacuees were transported through Switzerland to Évian or Annecy, where they were interviewed by the French military *Service des Renseignements* and became refugees within their own country.¹⁷⁶ In total, about 500,000 people were evacuated from the occupied area during the war,¹⁷⁷ including 10% of the Nord’s population.¹⁷⁸ The logic

¹⁷¹ Proclamation, Lille, April 1916, cited in Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.278.

¹⁷² Darrow, *French Women*, p.118-21; Henri Cochin (ancien député du Nord), Nicolas Bourgeois and André M. de Poncheville, *Le Nord dévasté* (Paris, 1920), p.10.

¹⁷³ See, for example, *The Times* (28-9th, 31st July; 3rd, 23rd, 28th August 1916); Jules Basdevant, *Les Déportations du Nord de la France et de la Belgique en vue du Travail forcé et le Droit International* (Paris, 1917); *Le Temps*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Matin* of 29th July 1916; FO 383/138: Foreign Office: Prisoners of War and Aliens Department: General Correspondence from 1906: France: Prisoners (1916) – Maurice de Bunsen to Lord Bertie, 5th October 1916, and Mr Spring Run to Viscount Grey of Falloden at the British Embassy in Washington, 31st July 1916; British Parliamentary Archives: Commons Sitting – Oral Answers to Questions. Deportation of Belgians. HC Deb 07 November 1916 vol 87 c6; HC Deb 21 November 1916 vol 87 cc1180-1; HC Deb 14 December 1916 vol 88 c809; HC Deb 28 November 1916 vol 88 c189W.

¹⁷⁴ See Becker, *Cicatrices*, pp.168-190; Sophie Odor and Muriel Rigole, ‘Les “brassards rouges”: le travail forcé dans le Nord sous l’occupation allemande, 1914-1918,’ mémoire de licence (Lille III, 1994); Basdevant, *Déportations*; Kramer, *Dynamic*, p.44-5; Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, pp.207-293.

¹⁷⁵ Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 14th November 1915, p.188.

¹⁷⁶ Philippe Nivet, *Les réfugiés français de la Grande Guerre (1914-1920): les “boches du Nord”* (Paris, 2004).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.56.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.157.

behind these removals from the occupied zone seems to have been one of the Germans removing 'bouches inutiles' and keeping the potentially productive human material.¹⁷⁹

The second was hostage-taking. The Germans, mirroring tactics used in the Franco-Prussian War,¹⁸⁰ took certain *occupés* hostage to assure the fulfilment of German demands or to dissuade the population from engaging in hostile acts. Sometimes the French were permitted to nominate hostages, sometimes the Germans chose them; often hostages were local notables, and had to spend at least a night in a prison.¹⁸¹ However, occasionally the Germans took larger numbers of hostages and sent them to camps outside of France, such as in Lithuania or, for most *Nordiste* hostages, Holzminden in Germany. There, these 'civilian prisoners' faced further restrictions and suffering, but most returned home after a certain period of internment.¹⁸²

The occupation of the Nord and northern France more generally from 1914 until 1918 was therefore above all an experience of suffering. Hardship generally increased after 1916 as German rule tightened in response to the military losses of that year (at the Battles of the Somme and Verdun), and to the heightened effects of the Allied naval blockade. It has been suggested that harsher German measures, such as the use of deportation and more frequent use of forced labourers, may have been a way of winning over hungry Germans, particularly women.¹⁸³ If this is the case, then the policies of occupation from 1916 in some sense represent what Horne has called 'remobilization',¹⁸⁴ an attempt by the *Kaiserreich* to bolster support for the war and reinvigorate Germany's

¹⁷⁹ Roland Allender, *1914-1918 dans le Nord: Survivre en pays occupé* (Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire, 2006), p.43; Becker, *Oubliés*, p.72.

¹⁸⁰ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *1870: La France dans la Guerre* (Paris, 1989), p.262.

¹⁸¹ See, for example, Becker, *Journaux*, Hirsch diary, 27th June 1915, p.240.

¹⁸² See Claudine Wallart, 'Déportation des prisonniers civils "au camp de concentration" d'Holzminden novembre 1916 – avril 1917,' *Revue du Nord*, 80:325 (April-June 1998), pp.417-448; idem, *Nord*, p.41-3; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.202-11.

¹⁸³ Becker, *Oubliés*, p.73.

¹⁸⁴ John Horne, 'Introduction,' *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), (ed.) idem, p.15.

own *culture de guerre*. These policies may also have reflected a growing desperation; this is nominally perceived to be the explanation of German policies during the liberation period, involving scorched earth tactics and the forced evacuation of French civilians from the shifting front.¹⁸⁵ Kramer argues that the exploitation of occupied territories and the attendant destruction of property, industrial and agricultural capital arose from strategic, political and economical calculations.¹⁸⁶ Isabel Hull believes that the explanation lies within wider German (Prussian) military culture, which had developed a totalising logic since the Franco-Prussian War, crystallised in the conflict with the Herero.¹⁸⁷

Yet although occupation was an unpleasant experience for French civilians throughout the entire four years, it was never as violent as that of the Eastern Front, which seem to have been forerunners to those of the Second World War.¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in the Nord as elsewhere, total war led to total occupation, to adapt Peter Holquist's summary of the First World War's effects on Russia.¹⁸⁹ Hull believes that the extent of the German instrumentalisation of the civilian population, the expropriation of wealth, and the destruction of infrastructure 'merits without hyperbole the word "total."¹⁹⁰ Economic woes, hunger, penury, restrictions on liberty of movement and expression, forced labour, deportation, the presence of hundreds of thousand of German troops nearby – in short, a 'total' occupation – suggest that *Nordistes* would have had extremely limited choices and courses of action. Yet, as Taylor has pointed out for the Nord-Pas-de-Calais in the

¹⁸⁵ Wallar, *Le Nord*, p.65; documents in ADN 9R1197 attesting to German destruction and scorched-earth policies.

¹⁸⁶ Kramer, *Dynamic*, p.41.

¹⁸⁷ See Hull, *Absolute*.

¹⁸⁸ See Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge, 2000); Lisa Mayerhofer, 'Making Friends and Foes: Occupiers and Occupied in First World War Romania, 1916-1918,' in Heather Jones, Jennifer O'Brien, and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian (eds.), *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Leiden, 2008), pp.119-150.

¹⁸⁹ Peter Holquist, 'Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-21,' in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 4:3 (2003), p.641.

¹⁹⁰ Hull, *Absolute*, p.248.

Second World War, whilst the Germans desired to be so, they were not in fact omnipotent.¹⁹¹ Choices and actions were restricted and subsequently took on greater symbolism, but there still remained a surprising and interesting range of responses to the occupation. Such reactions were guided by the *culture de l'occupé*, a differing form of wider war culture inevitably coloured by daily contact with the enemy. It is to these choices, perspectives, understandings – this culture – that this thesis now turns.

¹⁹¹ Taylor, *Between*, p.3.

Part I – *Une sacrée désunion: mauvaise conduite*

Collaboration is associated with the Second World War and, up until 1940 at least, was a neutral word meaning ‘working together.’ Its meaning later became more loaded, involving moral repugnancy and ideological perversion, particularly associated in French cultural and historical memory with the Vichy regime in what Henri Rousso calls the ‘Vichy syndrome.’¹ The word ‘collaboration’ is therefore problematic for an analysis of this earlier occupation, yet underlying notions are relevant. In 1914-18 the occupation was more limited geographically, but more *limiting* for the occupied population; there were choices to be made nonetheless, based around symbols and actions. The boundary between patriotism and treason was fluid, often crossing the grey area of ‘*accommodement*’² or more simply ‘survival.’

In this environment, French war culture morphed into a different *culture de l’occupé*. Central to this was the notion of respectability, involving unwritten but widely-accepted social mores combined with patriotism, which dictated what was perceived as correct and incorrect behaviour. It informed French interaction with the thousands of German men living alongside them. Many were aware of this moral-patriotic framework and the potential criticism from compatriots for a perceived breach of the limits of respectability. This was an extension of wider French war culture, outlined by Jean-Yves Le Naour:

À l’heure où les Français versent leur sang pour la patrie menacée, il est intolérable que certains se défilent et s’affranchissent de leur devoir. La surveillance collective, voire l’autosurveillance, rappelle les individus à l’ordre: tous doivent avoir une conduite irréprochable, sans quoi se battre est une tromperie, l’idéal est sali et la victoire compromise.³

¹ Rousso, *Vichy Syndrome*.

² Whitaker summarises this attitude: ‘Before long people in Roubaix began to settle down under the new *régime* [sic] – not at all with the calmness of despair, but because they thought it was as well to make the best of a bad job. Anyway, the war would be over at Christmas, and there was no use making a fuss.’ Whitaker, *Under the Heel*, p.31.

³ Le Naour, *Misères*, p.14.

The next two chapters examine perceived breaches of this moral-patriotic framework, broadly defined. The reality behind accusations of wrongdoing is almost impossible to discern, although an attempt will be made to judge the ‘real’ scale of such behaviours. Nevertheless, the perceptions themselves prove a fascinating subject of study, a doorway into the *culture de l’occupé*. I will highlight the forms that misconduct was perceived to have taken, and argue that types of behaviour were criticised which do not fall into the remit of the loaded, anachronistic term ‘collaboration,’ and which were not necessarily illegal.⁴ Subsequently, a new conceptual category for understanding the ‘dark side’ of this occupation, and perhaps others, is proposed. That category is ‘mauvaise conduite.’

Defining *mauvaise conduite*

On 8th November 1918, the Applancourt sisters from Prisches were under investigation for their occupation conduct. It was alleged they told the Germans that their father was hiding weapons, leading to his imprisonment. They were also accused of having German lovers; one daughter admitted this was true. The episode illustrates the conflation of treason and sexual misconduct.⁵ It is unclear what the truth is, although their mother spoke of her ‘deshonneur’ at her daughters’ ‘relations avec l’ennemi.’⁶ Whatever the reality, the witnesses interviewed did not approve of the actions of the sisters; the investigating gendarme stated that he was examining their *mauvaise conduite* (misconduct or bad behaviour).⁷ This term does not relate uniquely to occupation behaviour – *mauvaise conduite* existed as a concept before the war⁸ – and the term was not employed all that frequently. Nevertheless, people from the occupied area did occasionally use the term *mauvaise conduite* to describe behaviour that was, to them,

⁴ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.296.

⁵ ADN 9R1197: Prisches, Lotard, report n°231, 8th November 1918.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ ADN 9R1196: Lys, Bailly, report n°142, 30th October 1918.

deplorable from a moral-patriotic standpoint.⁹ It was interchangeable with the word ‘inconduite,’¹⁰ but I opt for *mauvaise conduite*, partly echoing Gromaire’s notion of ‘mauvais éléments.’¹¹ Its antithesis was *belle conduite*, for which individuals were praised after the war.¹²

This notion provides a springboard from which to launch a new conceptual category. I use *mauvaise conduite* as an umbrella term to describe forms of behaviour not all labelled explicitly under this rubric at the time, but perceived in a negative light by occupied, and occasionally non-occupied, compatriots. It refers to any kind of complicity, not just to actions which were illegal or harmed compatriots, although the multiple forms of misconduct were intertwined, in perceptions and possibly in practice. Certainly, all actions viewed as misconduct received similar opprobrium whether in diaries, interviews with repatriated individuals, or post-war police reports or trials. Sexual relations were derided as much as denunciations; friendly relations were scorned as much as commerce with the Germans.

The ‘respectable’ behaviour against which *mauvaise conduite* was placed involved acts such as refusing to work for the Germans, remaining hostile to and avoiding all forms of intimacy with the enemy, and staying ‘dignified’ despite daily privations. Against this framework, legal actions such as sexual or friendly relations with Germans, or leading a lifestyle considered overly lavish, could only be perceived as betraying the community. Misconduct also veered into the illegal, although legal, semi-illegal and illegal misconduct were often conflated – complicity never came alone, because of the need to redefine the

⁹ See, for example, SHD 17N433: Sûreté Générale, 3^e Armée Britannique, État-Major, Procès-verbal 21st December 1917, testimony of Henri Duquenne (Courchelettes); ADHS 4M513: Évian, Rapatriés, report n°1264, 28th April 1917; n°675, 5th February 1917.

¹⁰ See, for example, SHD 19N547: G.Q.G., État-Major-Général, 2^e Bureau, S.R.A., Note pour les S.R. d’Armée, 14th August 1916; SHD 17N433: Mission Française de Sûreté Générale attachée à la 4^e Armée Britannique, Procès-verbal n°238, 7th February 1918 (Auby).

¹¹ Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.334.

¹² ADN 15J87: Commission Historique du Nord, Questionnaire de la Guerre de 1914, Département du Nord, Arrondissement de Cambrai, Canton du Cateau, Commune de Montay, 1923.

community as one of suffering, both for the occupied population and the fighting French soldiers. Any affront to the community of suffering, whether sleeping with Germans or actively spying for them, suggested further complicity; the abandonment of the local community for the enemy could never be purely symbolic.

To examine all aspects of *mauvaise conduite*, and to highlight the way in which illegal and legal misconduct was conflated, it is necessary to outline the Third Republic's legal understanding of 'collaboration' (as Renée Martinage calls it). In the only work specifically dealing with collaboration in the First World War, Martinage explains that this emanates from articles 77-79 of the *code pénal*, involving the crime of 'intelligence avec l'ennemi.'¹³ This covered passing information of military or political nature to enemies and carrying out espionage on their behalf, but also 'fournir aux ennemis des secours en soldats, hommes, argent, vivres, armes ou munitions.'¹⁴ This legal definition of these crimes against state security meant that engaging in any form of commerce with the enemy, as well as aiding them on a more obvious 'intelligence' level, constituted treason. Yet, for many, this legal understanding was not the final word. Less clearly-defined 'antipatriotic' behaviour, theoretically exempt from punishment and arguably less important in the eyes of French law, was frequently perceived as equally repugnant and worthy of punishment (or at least disdain) by the local populations themselves. Consequently, any sort of 'relations' (sexual, friendly, commercial or other) with the Germans were deemed unsavoury, if not illegal, and thus comprised *mauvaise conduite*. Often legal misconduct was said to occur alongside illegal misconduct. It must be stated that the use of the term *mauvaise conduite* does not reflect a judgement on the historian's part – instead it is based on contemporary perceptions and culture.

¹³ Renée Martinage, 'Les collaborateurs devant la cour d'assises du Nord après la très Grande Guerre,' *Revue du Nord*, 77:309 (January-March 1995), p.99-101, including footnotes.

¹⁴ Code pénal, article 77, cited in *ibid.*, p.100.

I – *Collaboration horizontale? Sexual mauvaise conduite*

Notions of *mauvaise conduite* were always heavily gendered – it was seen as a fundamentally female phenomenon.¹ This ties in with the demographic of the Nord, but also with the idea that collaboration was linked to weakness and submission. Even after the Second World War this was still the case: Anne Simonin argues that the *collaboratrice* remains the key feature of French collective memory of this war – collaboration itself, as Sartre argued, being ‘*la collaboration*’ for a reason, constituting ‘une activité féminine.’² Indeed, as Philippe Nivet has demonstrated, in 1914-18 this gendering of collaboration was the cornerstone of the non-occupied French view of the occupied populations as ‘Boches du Nord.’³

The primary form of this misconduct involved intimate relations between French women and Germans. Nivet and Le Naour have studied this topic in depth, highlighting the view of such women as ‘mauvaises Françaises’ or ‘femmes à Boches’ by their compatriots on both sides of the trenches.⁴ Sexual relations with the Germans were viewed as a moral crime, a transgression of what Le Naour calls ‘l’interdit patriotique.’⁵ Sexual misconduct was perceived as occurring on a large scale: the *Commissaire de Police* of Comines, interviewed at Évian on 20th December 1917, estimated that eight out of ten women had frequented the Germans, bourgeois women as much as working-class women – the latter

¹ Redier noted that: ‘Des écrivains ont raconté les orgies nocturnes de cette racaille: ils ont pris tant de plaisir aux ébats de femmes sans nom ni patrie qui vivaient alors de la guerre et se vendaient aux Allemands, qu’ils n’ont pas du tout, ces Français, pensé aux autres, à nos femmes, à nos filles, délibérément jetées dans des bouges orduriers par les barbares.’ Antoine Redier, *Allemands*, p.242-3.

² Anne Simonin, ‘La femme invisible: la collaboratrice politique,’ *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, N°9 (September-December 2009), p.1 and 3, accessed online on 5th July 2011 at www.histoire-politique.fr

³ Nivet, *Boches*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.387-421; idem, ‘Femmes’; idem, *France*, pp.279-92; Le Naour, *Misères*, pp.276-300; idem, ‘Femmes tondues et répression des “femmes à boches” en 1918,’ *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 47:1 (January-March 2000), pp.148-158.

⁵ Le Naour, *Misères*, p.290.

‘qui ont au moins l’excuse de la souffrance et de la misère.’⁶ Repatriated inhabitants from Valenciennes estimated that 60% of women engaged in debauchery with the Germans.⁷ Even if the reality was less dramatic, the belief that this was the case and the disdain in which such women were held was central to the *culture de l’occupé* – and this belief was ubiquitous. Accusations of sexual misconduct flood documents relating interviews of repatriated or liberated people from all occupied departments, and *Nordistes* feature prominently.⁸ Nivet describes this as an obsession of the occupied populations,⁹ and Le Naour notes that ‘la figure de la “femme à boches” se figure dans la quasi-totalité des témoignages.’¹⁰ Becker believes these are not purely witness testimony, because ‘Le conflit n’est pas fini, tous les moyens sont bons pour vaincre, et accuser des milliers de femmes de rapports avec l’occupant est une façon d’exonérer les hommes incapables de gagner la guerre.’¹¹ For Becker, the reality is that ‘les rapports entre femmes françaises et hommes allemands ont été alors très limités,’¹² but the truth is impossible to verify; the obsession itself is the only verifiable fact.

There was a difference between ‘frequenting the Germans’ (always implying intimacy, usually sexual) and general ‘debauchery’ (which may have been less likely to involve sexual acts, but other unrespectable actions such as drunkenness or dancing). Often actions regarded as sexual did not involve sex but constituted a breach of the limits of acceptability, such as playing an accordion in the presence of Germans. Indeed, a man being in a room with a woman on her own was unrespectable, even more so if the man was a German. Yet there was also a distinction between public and private intimacy, with public displays of closeness usually perceived as more reprehensible, and private intimacy more based on assumptions. Further, some forms of evidence are more

⁶ ADHS 4M519, Commissariat d’Évian, interrogatoire n°3362, 20th December 1917, cited in Le Naour, ‘Femmes tondues,’ p.152.

⁷ ADHS 4M352, report n°356, 19th December 1916, cited in Nivet, *Boches*, 388.

⁸ See ADHS 4M513, 517-20; SHD 17N433, 19N547, 19N1571, *passim*.

⁹ Nivet, *Boches*, 387.

¹⁰ Le Naour, *Misères*, p.276.

¹¹ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.241.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.240.

objective than others: rumour and *rapatrié* testimony is more questionable than witness statements in police reports, for instance.

Archival evidence demonstrates the extent of the fixation – see the following tables.

Statistical breakdown of suspect individuals in January-April 1917 interviews with *rapatriés*

Total number of suspect individuals	1,566
Number of <i>Nordistes</i> among all suspects	1,237
Number of female <i>Nordistes</i> among all suspects	928
Total number of female <i>Nordistes</i> accused of sexual misconduct	690

13

Statistical breakdown of suspects compiled by the British I(b) Intelligence Service, July-October 1918

Total number of suspect individuals identifiable by sex	797
Total number of women among all suspects	702
Total number of women from the Nord	416
Total number of female <i>Nordistes</i> signalled as: mistresses of Germans, prostituting themselves or family members to the Germans, having intimate relations with Germans, having been treated for venereal disease, having children born of German fathers, or being on 'good' or 'friendly' terms with Germans (usually implying sexual intimacy)	362

14

French *Deuxième Bureau* suspect lists also contain many women accused of intimacy with the Germans, although files devoted to the Nord are lacking.¹⁵

¹³ ADHS 4M513, passim. 'At least,' because often the suspect's gender and crime is unclear, and I have yet to carry out a statistical survey of the remaining Évien interrogations listed above.

¹⁴ US NA Record Group 120: entry 198, and Record Group 165. Thanks to Tammy Proctor for sending me these files.

Lifting the Veil: Liberation

Documents remain of post-liberation investigations carried out in a small section of the Nord – effectively Lille’s metropolitan area¹⁶ – by French gendarmes primarily attached to the British Army.¹⁷ These inquiries concentrated on almost 500 women, all accused of having engaged in sexual misconduct (mainly prostitution) with Germans.¹⁸ It thus appears that this form of misconduct was scrutinised more frequently than others. This may be linked to the soldiers’ wartime inhibitions and rumours regarding the infidelity of wives and girlfriends, even in unoccupied France – many wrote of the ‘*désordres et débauche dans le sexe féminin*,’¹⁹ suggesting that occupied women were *a priori* viewed as suspects. In any case, such inquiries were also conducted in spring 1917 when the Germans retreated to the Siegfried-Hindenburg line, leaving numerous villages to be recaptured by the Allies.²⁰ Investigating such misconduct in the Aisne-Nord sector in April 1917, *commissaire spécial* Busch distinguished three types of suspect women: those who had children born of German fathers, those who had intimate relations with the Germans (including prostitutes), and those who underwent medical visits and had venereal disease.²¹ These categories of suspect behaviour are present in all investigations into female conduct.

Whilst the post-liberation investigations into female behaviour were more numerous, they were often less detailed than investigations into male misconduct (see below). As with all documents on *mauvaise conduite*, these gendarme reports may not be wholly representative, since the documents that survive seemingly constitute only a randomly

¹⁵ See, for example, SHD 17N207: lists of suspects in Meurthe-et-Moselle.

¹⁶ ADN 9R1196. The communes present are: Croix, Flers, Lannoy, Leers, Lys, Mouvaux, Roubaix, Toufflers, Wasquehal and Wattrelos.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ David Englander, ‘The French Soldier, 1914-18,’ *French History*, 1 (1987), p.57.

²⁰ Smith et al., *France*, p.119.

²¹ SHAT 19N547: rapport du commissaire Busch du 3 avril 1917, cited in Le Naour, ‘Femmes tondues,’ p.155.

preserved part of a much larger original corpus.²² Perhaps because of the widespread nature of these inquiries, and the large number of suspects investigated, such reports are considerably shorter than the *procès-verbaux* concerning male *mauvaise conduite*. These 'female *mauvaise conduite*' reports usually comprise a few lines, detailing the woman's actions during the occupation, whether she had undergone 'medical testing' for venereal disease at the hands of German *or* French authorities, and finally whether the gendarme thought it prudent for her to undergo such tests at the time of writing and/or be expelled from the liberated region. This appears to have been the only punishment used against these particular women, even for those who were said to have been involved in what might be viewed as more 'serious,' 'illegal,' and 'antipatriotic' actions (such as denouncing compatriots).²³ This attests to the temporary nature of these rapid investigations and their conclusions, although expulsion is hardly a mild punishment.

What is clear is that numerous witnesses, and indeed the investigating French authorities, *did* believe that misconduct had taken place during the occupation – and devoted considerable amounts of manpower and time to uncover the 'truth.' However, the gendarmes also investigated tales of German atrocities, of pillage and destruction during the German retreat, and occasionally of resistance on the part of the *occupés*²⁴ – thus they were not specifically ordered to investigate *mauvaise conduite* exclusively. Indeed, often cases of resistance are mixed with tales of collaboration: one report into activities in the commune of Rejet-de-Beaulieu noted that six English soldiers were hidden by locals for four to five months, until they were denounced by other inhabitants.²⁵

Yet many reports are dominated by the sexual conduct of these women, not necessarily 'antipatriotic' conduct. Indeed, in some cases the sexual conduct of women is described as questionable or even deplorable, although they are not seen as a suspect from the

²² Fitzpatrick, 'Signals,' p.835-6. Fitzpatrick refers to letters of denunciation being randomly preserved.

²³ ADN 9R1196: Croix, Chasseing, 7th November 1918.

²⁴ See ADN 9R1197, *passim*.

²⁵ ADN 9R1196: Rejet-de-Beaulieu, Hospital and Fauchier, *procès-verbal*, 11th November 1918.

‘point de vue national,’²⁶ or not perceived to have caused harm to or denounced their compatriots.²⁷ Sometimes women’s sexual relations with the Germans were confirmed, but the investigator concluded with ‘Je ne crois pas qu’on puisse lui reprocher des faits d’espionnage ou de dénonciation.’²⁸ It was only legal treason that could be punished and judged. This seems to demonstrate, paradoxically, both the non-occupied French authorities’ understanding of the complexity of occupied life, but also a lack of comprehension of the *culture de l’occupé*, which conflated sexual and other misconduct, viewing them as inextricably linked and equally reprehensible.

Prostitution

One sub-branch of sexual misconduct was prostitution. It is extremely difficult to determine whether reports of prostitution are true, not only in the sense of whether women accused of such actions carried them out, but if they did, also whether they perceived of it as prostitution in the same way the gendarmes and the French authorities did. Further, according to the historian Benoît Majerus, in his work on wartime prostitution in Brussels, ‘les prostituées sont en quelque sorte doublement des “Oublié[e]s de la Grande Guerre” [...]: en tant que membres des populations occupées et en tant que marginales de ces sociétés.’²⁹ As a marginal section of a marginalised population, itself rather occluded from First World War historiography and memory, prostitutes and the reality of prostitution prove an elusive topic to study.

Nevertheless, Nivet remarks that many women admitted being prostitutes during Évien interrogations, and concludes that ‘L’essor de la prostitution semble avoir été important

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Croix, Porceaux, 9th November 1918; Mouvaux, Fontaneau, 1st November 1918; Mouvaux, Déprez, 30th October 1918; Roubaix, Feóx-Courtis, 31st October 1918.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Croix, Duhain, 8th November 1918; Lannoy, Mignot, 4th November 1918; Lannoy, Huilliez, 14th November 1918.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Leers, Hectrin, 3rd November 1918.

²⁹ Benoît Majerus, ‘La prostitution à Bruxelles pendant la Grande Guerre: contrôle et pratique,’ *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés/Crime, History & Societies*, 7:1 (2003), p.3 (of PDF available online at <http://chs.revues.org/index603.html>).

en zone occupée.³⁰ Of the 490 women investigated in November 1918, 178 were explicitly mentioned as being prostitutes or suspected as such (via the phrase ‘passe pour s’être livrée à la prostitution’)³¹ – and most of the phrases used to describe the remaining women suggest prostitution, such as statements like ‘s’est livrée plusieurs fois aux soldats allemands.’³² From the language of reports it seems that prostitution was perceived by investigating authorities as worse than a ‘normal,’ spontaneous relationship between French women and Germans. This was despite the fact that the latter could be seen as more ‘collaborationist,’ especially considering that – theoretically – the act of prostitution meant that certain Germans were ‘spending’ valuable resources rather than leaving them to the military, not to mention the threat of these soldiers contracting venereal disease! Not everyone agrees that prostitution was solely a negative act, with one recent author arguing that ‘Les putaines ont fait autant de dégâts dans l’armée allemande que les canons de 75 français.’³³ As Majerus notes: ‘En période de guerre, la prostitution est encore plus fortement stigmatisée qu’en temps de paix. Elle est à l’opposé de l’image qu’un pays en guerre se fait de lui-même [...] Dans un pays coupé de son armée, le devoir patriotique est jugé particulièrement important. Il permet de poursuivre la lutte contre l’ennemi sur le *home front*. La prostituée apparaît dans ce contexte comme traître.’³⁴ This is also explained by the focus on the safety of Allied soldiers and the fear of venereal disease, as well as more general concerns about racial purity and national hygiene, which further developed across Europe in the post-war period.³⁵

³⁰ Nivet, *France*, p.283.

³¹ ADN 9R1196: Croix, report by Poreaux, n°154, 7th November 1918. Henceforth the words ‘report by’ will be omitted and the format will be: ‘Locality, name of report author, report number (if available), report date.’

³² *Ibid.*, Wasquehal, Fleury, n°97, 5th November 1918.

³³ Jean-Claude Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.40.

³⁴ Majerus, ‘Prostitution,’ p.7-8. Italics in original. See also Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.240-1.

³⁵ See, for example, Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London, 1998), pp.77-105. For such fears during the war itself, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *L’enfant de l’ennemi, 1914-1918: Viol, avortement, infanticide pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris, 1995).

Indeed, evidence of women officially recognised as prostitutes or ‘femmes de mauvaise vie’ by the Germans was seen as incriminating for the *women*, not the national enemy. Such evidence could comprise being a registered prostitute (*cartée*), having undergone medical examinations or time in hospital recovering from venereal disease, or even having been arrested by the Germans for unlicensed prostitution or propagation of venereal disease.³⁶ This was not conceived of by post-liberation French authorities as proof of questionable behaviour on the Germans’ part: they were not alive to the possibility that Germans may have forced thousands of ‘innocent’ women to undergo medical examinations, treating them like prostitutes, which numerous occupation memoirs and later histories claim did happen.³⁷ Any woman who underwent a medical exam at the hands of the Germans was instantly suspect in the eyes of French authorities – representative of what Stéphane Audouin-Rouzeau describes as a French ‘syphilophobia,’³⁸ and of the ‘péril vénérien,’³⁹ a fear of venereal disease and national degeneration heightened by the war, and an arguably rational fear of disease spreading among the troops. As is thus evident, both the French and Germans shared this fear, and the German ‘contrôle sanitaire totale, véritable dictature prophylactique’⁴⁰ thus rendered many *occupées* suspect in the eyes of the post-liberation French (particularly military) authorities.

The extent of German control and the number of prostitutes can be gleaned through statistical information: on I(b) subject lists, 64 *Nordistes* are accused of prostitution;⁴¹ at least 65 appear in the Évien testimonies examined.⁴² German documents concerning prostitutes having undergone medical treatment (seemingly for venereal disease) in

³⁶ ADN 9R1196: Croix, Duhain, n°276, 9th November 1918 and Chasseing, n°294, 10th November 1918; Wasquehal, Fleury, n°78, 5th November 1918, et passim.

³⁷ See, for example, Trochon, *Lille*, p.128-9; Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.459-63; Redier, *Allemands*, p.46.

³⁸ Audouin-Rouzeau, *L’enfant de l’ennemi*, p.155.

³⁹ Le Naour, *Misères*, p.127.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.142.

⁴¹ US NA Record Group 120: entry 198, and Record Group 165.

⁴² ADHS 4M513.

various hospitals in Lille, and who were discharged in December 1916, list at least 1,221 women (some of whom came from Belgium).⁴³ By the liberation, 6,200 women ‘appartenant à tous les mondes’ had been treated for VD in the four *dispensaires* of Lille – although not all had been prostitutes, the *Commissaire de Police* of Lille nevertheless provided these statistics in the middle of a paragraph about prostitution, which had ‘pris des proportions considérables dès l’arrivée des allemands [sic].’⁴⁴ In Tourcoing, just one *lazaret* had treated 410 women by 31st December 1916.⁴⁵ Prostitution and attendant controls therefore seem to have existed on a large scale. It was not just the Germans who took a dim view of prostitution (and female sexual conduct) for hygiene reasons – the local French administration and religious authorities in the occupied territory continued pre-war anti-prostitution and anti-VD policies, thus mostly supported German measures (although not the enforced medical visits on women who were not prostitutes), viewing prostitution as a ‘fléau’⁴⁶ and also talking of the ‘Péril Vénérien [sic].’⁴⁷

However, any contact with Germans does appear to have also been perceived by the non-occupied French authorities as morally and physically dangerous and contagious: in *all* of the aforementioned 490 post-liberation investigations in the Nord, Germans are mentioned, even in those regarding women who are not explicitly described as prostitutes.⁴⁸ These cases only come to light because of contact with the Germans. Thus there seems to be some confusion for the investigating gendarmes about what exactly they were looking for – sexual misconduct or patriotic misconduct, or both, with each one reinforcing the other. Further, not all cases of intimate relations with Germans were automatically perceived as prostitution: in one extraordinary case, one Mlle Lenoy of the commune of Lannoy responded to accusations that she had had intimate relations with,

⁴³ AML 4H265 bis: ‘Dispensaire des filles soumises.’ The list is incomplete and messy, so it is impossible to know the complete number.

⁴⁴ ADN 9R584: Report of Commissaire de Police de Lille, 12th November 1918.

⁴⁵ AMT H4A30: Refuge de Femmes, Boulevard Gambetta 270, 15th January 1917.

⁴⁶ AML 4H265 bis: Bureau d’Hygiène to the mayor, 22nd November 1916.

⁴⁷ AML 4H123: Dr Calmette, ‘Ce qu’il faut dire à nos Jeune Gens en prévision de leur départ possible loin de leur foyer familial,’ April 1917, p.1. Original emphasis.

⁴⁸ ADN 9R1196: Croix, Dupuis, n°203, 7th November 1918.

and even married, a German infantry sergeant by stating: 'L'amour n'a pas de Patrie.' The report continues: 'Malgré cela sa conduite n'était pas scandaleuse,'⁴⁹ clearly demonstrating that the focus is on sexual behaviour – although Lenoy's comments reflect non-patriotic rather than anti-patriotic sentiment.

Living it Up

Not all investigating gendarmes, and especially *occupés* themselves, were so forgiving. Stock phrases reappear throughout the reports, used to describe the actions of the women, and these provide an insight into the nature and perception of sexual *mauvaise conduite*. Women who 'faisait la noce/la fête,' who were seen or heard to be dancing, singing and listening to music with the Germans, and who frequented or were frequented by the Germans, or even those who showed a 'sympathetic attitude' towards the Germans, were considered to be morally suspect.⁵⁰ Indeed, during the war the *X^e Armée* compiled lists of 'personnes suspectes' and 'habitants douteux' (as well as 'personnes sûres') in occupied territory likely to be re-conquered in an Allied advance; two women in Caudry and two in Denain were listed as suspects because they 'font la fête avec les Allemands.'⁵¹ Thus the merest hint at a positive (or even the absence of a negative) attitude towards the Germans, and even friendly rather than overtly sexual actions, gave rise to suspicion amongst the local population. Dancing, singing, and generally having a good time with Germans appears to have been perceived as a particular brand of antipatriotic *mauvaise conduite*.

In the commune of Wattrelos, a *cabaretière* is mentioned in a gendarme's report as having received Germans at her home, which was a place 'pour consommer et danser'

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Lannoy, Ghesquier, n°29, 15th November 1918.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Croix, Duhain, n°123, 6th November 1918 and n°254, 8th November 1918; Dupuis, n°193 and n°199, 7th November 1918 and n°245, 8th November 1918; Fleury, n°156, 9th November 1918; Duchain, n°183, 7th November 1918; Roubaix, Paris, n.d. (seemingly 25th-27th October 1918); Flers, Beaussart, n°59, 5th November 1918; Lys, Fontaneau, 29th October 1918, et passim.

⁵¹ SHD 19N1571: 'Renseignement' cards, Caudry and Denain. There was seemingly a difference between being 'suspect' and 'douteux' – both appear in '2^e Bureau S.R., Zone des missions d'Agents du S.R. au-delà des lignes,' n.d.

(she was also said to be the mistress of a German and had undergone a sanitary visit).⁵² The *occupés* (during and after the occupation) themselves looked on such behaviour with disdain and suspicion, as can be viewed in the testimony of one Mme Thibaux regarding the conduct of Mme de Metz, a fellow inhabitant of Solre-le-Château. Other than the denunciations for which de Metz was allegedly responsible, her behaviour was also suspect because she had had relations with German soldiers throughout the occupation, especially gendarmes, many of whom were her lovers. Further, 'C'était constamment, et nuit et jour, des fêtes chez elle, on y dansait et on y faisait de la musique.'⁵³

In her Évian interrogation, *rapatriée* Mme Gondry of Hautmont stated that Daria Gregoire and her sister Marguerite – daughters in a family of German sympathisers, with their father and their brother working voluntarily for the Germans – 'se rendaient fréquemment chez Madame RAMART, Louis, où un nommé LACROIX.....22 ans [sic], jouait de l'accordéon et où l'on dansait et chantait.'⁵⁴ The fact that such details are mentioned suggests that they were regarded as scandalous: combined with her other behaviour, they provided the final proof of the moral corruption of such women. In a post-war document regarding a woman who allegedly prostituted herself during the occupation, the following damning sentence was underlined: 'Elle festoyait avec eux et se saoulait [sic].'⁵⁵ Thus, just as in Belgium, feasting and partying became 'l'ultime signe de l'infamie [...] l'injustice par excellence, l'image même de la trahison du Malheur commun, l'inversion du deuil et de la faim.'⁵⁶

Flaunting luxury and wealth became another form of *mauvaise conduite*. There was sometimes a class element to this, perhaps linked to puritanical Catholicism. In Lille, the

⁵² ADN 9R1196: Wattrelos, Hussier, n°43, 8th November 1918.

⁵³ ADN 9R1197: Solre-le-Château – report, Jean Duschamps (Force Spéciale de Gendarmerie attachée à l'Armée Britannique, Prévôté de D-1), 16th November 1918. Testimony of Mme Thibaux.

⁵⁴ US NA Record Group 120: Entry 198 – Procès-verbal, déclaration de Madame GONDRY, Marie, rapatriée de Hautmont, Nord, 1918.

⁵⁵ ADN 9R1196: Croix, Dupuis, n°192, 7th November 1918.

⁵⁶ Laurence van Ypersele, 'La figure de l'incivique ou la trahison de la Patrie,' in *Patrie*, p.204.

female workers of the textile mills (*filatures*) displayed no sense of economy: they ‘cherchent à satisfaire surtout leur désir de gourmandise plutôt que de rechercher un peu de bien être [sic] ou de parer aux besoins les plus urgents; c’est ainsi qu’on voit des femmes, des mères de famille, acheter dans les pâtisseries des bonbons et chocolats, alors que les riches s’en privent.’⁵⁷ Public displays of joy and extravagance were unfitting during wartime, when the occupied population believed it was engaged in unified, dignified suffering for France – a ‘Calvary’ according to many in the pious Nord.⁵⁸

During the occupation itself, police reports from the *Commissariat central* of Lille mention ‘délits’ of people (usually cabaret owners, often female such as Mme de Metz) having ‘laissé danser et jouer de la musique sans autorisation.’⁵⁹ This may simply refer to probable laws regarding the permission required to put on shows or other forms of entertainment, but it may be said even in this dry list there seems to be an underlying notion that such behaviour was simply not acceptable given the circumstances. Further, judging from other sources, it is likely that such cabarets had Germans as their clientele, with female *occupées* joining them.⁶⁰ This still remains as evidence that not everyone forwent enjoyment during the occupation, contrary to what the majority of narratives of the occupation (memoirs *and* histories) lead the reader to believe.

The contempt in which these women were held is explicit: Séraphine Descamps from Trélon was said to live a scandalous life with German officers.⁶¹ In the commune of Lys-lez-Lannoy, according to the mayor, one Mme Terrasse had always demonstrated ‘good’ behaviour before the war. However, during the occupation she demonstrated ‘une conduite déplorable’: although she was not a prostitute, ‘sa maison était fréquentée par

⁵⁷ ADHS 4M513: report n°989, 14th March 1917.

⁵⁸ AML 4H241: Mlle Munch to mayor, 9th November 1918.

⁵⁹ See, for example, AML 4H267: Commissariat central de Lille, ‘crimes, délits, événements’ report of 11-12th December 1916, et passim.

⁶⁰ Roubaisien David Hirsch noted on 12th July 1915 that ‘Tous les cafés fermés jour et nuit sauf quelques-uns exclusivement pour les allemands [sic].’ Becker, *Journaux*, p.242.

⁶¹ ADHS 4M513: report n°899, 7th March 1917 (Trélon).

beaucoup de soldats allemands,' one of whom had been her lover, with whom she often walked in the street and 'faisait la fête.' She was consequently expelled from her home by her father-in-law, moving in with her aunt in Leers, where her conduct was 'très reprehensible [sic]' – 'sa maison était le rendez-vous des policeman [sic] ennemis, et beaucoup de marchandises et denrées saisies par eux étaient achetées par elle et revendues à son bénéfice.'⁶² The negative judgement of her behaviour is palpable – once again, sexual and other misconduct are linked – and is closely tied to wider social mores, held by all classes. For example, in July 1915 a woman from Tourcoing who had left 'le domicile maternel pour vivre en concubinage' with a Frenchman was refused the allowance to which she had been entitled whilst living with her mother, because the municipality thought that this would encourage 'l'inconduite de cette fille' and would be 'contraire à tout principe de morale.'⁶³ This is an example of pre-war morality, but there are ways in which this combines with a *culture de l'occupé* to create a new morality.

Many women engaged in sexual misconduct were seen as not only betraying their country, but their husbands at the front, and polite society. Often the extra detail 'le mari est sur le front/mobilisé/prisonnier' was added without commentary by those interrogated at Évian,⁶⁴ and post-war investigators.⁶⁵ This critical detail spoke for itself, its concise phrasing full of the restraint seen as lacking in these women. Overall, at least 270 married women from the Nord were suspected by interrogated refugees of intimate relations with the Germans.⁶⁶ A wartime French intelligence report about occupied Lille suggests that such relationships may have actually represented attempts to ameliorate the situation of husbands, brothers and sons who were prisoners-of-war.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the

⁶² ADN 9R1196: Croix, Cousinet, 17th November 1918.

⁶³ AMT H4A27: Mairie de Tourcoing, Bureau de Bienfaisance, 20th July 1915.

⁶⁴ See ADHS 4M513, such as report n°477, 12th January 1917 (Cambrai).

⁶⁵ See ADN 9R1196.

⁶⁶ ADHS 4M513; other documents do not record the marital status efficiently.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* report n°1140, 19th April 1917.

view of refugees was simplistic: 'Les femmes de mobilisables même, se prostituent sans vergogne.'⁶⁸

One patois song allegedly written during the occupation by Labbé,⁶⁹ entitled 'A l' Poubelle les Paillaisses à Boches,' expresses anger at women who danced and drank alcohol in the company of Germans – and also demonstrates their lack of social mores and morals in saying that these women replied to the vendors of the German-published *Bulletin de Lille*, who would cry out the name of that paper, by shouting 'Putain de Lille!' at them.⁷⁰ Such a nickname for the paper could comprise a form of resistance against the German-imposed order, but Labbé clearly does not see this as such. Instead, he hints that these women came from the lower class, or had no manners – and thus perhaps that it was no surprise that they would 'frequent' the Germans. Labbé wrote another two songs on the subject of female misconduct, one being 'Chin qu'on vo' pendant la guerre (Occupation de Lille par les Allemands).' The first thing he thought worth mentioning in his list of what one sees in Lille during the war was female misconduct:

Mais j' vos tell'mint d'faits révoltants
Qu' malgré mi je m'mets in colère
Trop d'femm's sont bien avé l's all'mands
V'là chin qu'on vo' pendant la guerre.⁷¹

Labbé's evident outrage continues in the second and third verses, noting that 'L'soir ch'est honteux d'vir dins les coins/Chés femm's dins les bras des Alboches,' and explicitly mentioning the possibility of German-born children: 'Je n' s'ros point surpris l'an prochain/D' vir des p'tits prussiens v'nir au monte/Dins les choux d'août, ch'est

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, report n°496, 17th January 1917 (Valenciennes).

⁶⁹ Auguste Labbé, *A la Guerre comme à la Guerre: les Boches A Lille – Recueil de chansons lilloises écrites pendant L'Occupation Allemande, par Auguste Labbe alias César Latulupe, ex-prisonnier civil du bagne d'Anrath et d'Holzminden* (Lille, 1919), p.2 (préface by J. Chauleur).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.49.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

certain/Qu' pus d'eun' femm' récolt'ra d' la honte.⁷² Labbé's other song dealing with 'suspect' women, entitled 'Les Bochartes,' was ostensibly written on 5th August 1915.

The second verse is striking:

Oubliant cheux qu'à l' frontière
S' font brav' mint crever la peau
Chés Bochart's, plus bass's que terre,
Trahi' ch'nt leu' sang, leu' drapeau,
Près des Alboch's, chés friponnes,
Pour plaire à chés scélérats,
Ell's se font lâches et espionnes
In débinant nos paut's soldats,
Chés femm's sans honneur,
Monstres et sans pudeur
N'ont point pour deux doupes d' cœur.⁷³

The language used reflects the disdain in which the author, and often the occupied population at large, held women who were 'with the Germans.' Intimacy with the Germans was an intolerable transgression and a form of treason.⁷⁴

The orgy-like atmosphere evoked when women are said to have received Germans *and* danced or listened to music evidently increases the suspicion regarding their sexual conduct, but also suggests that they were engaged in what may be termed expressions of happiness, pleasure, or even amusement during this period of sombre 'martyrdom.' These became, as in Belgium, 'véritable[s] image[s] inverse[s] du malheur quotidien vécu par la population.'⁷⁵ The act of expressing positive emotions and enjoyment was frowned upon during a period of war, when Frenchmen were dying for their country, and *occupés* engaged in 'dignified martyrdom.'⁷⁶ Nevertheless, as the paper *Le Mercure segréen* noted in June 1918, 'les provinces martyres ne produisent pas que des saints.'⁷⁷ These women were perceived as morally and patriotically suspect, and therefore a mental

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.47.

⁷⁴ Le Naour, 'Femmes tondues,' p.151.

⁷⁵ Van Ypersele, 'La figure de l'incivique,' p.204.

⁷⁶ Yerta sisters, *Six Women*, p.158.

⁷⁷ *Le Mercure segréen*, 30th June 1918, cited in Nivet, *Boches*, p.356.

leap from 'positive attitude towards the Germans' to 'sexual relations with the Germans' was often made, or insinuated; and vice versa. This once again demonstrates the conflation of sexual and other misconduct, a blurring which started with but extended beyond the *occupés*. Indeed, it is unclear whether investigating gendarmes were more focused on sexual behaviour, acting under a brief similar to that of the *police des mœurs*, or on sexual *and* moral-patriotic conduct. Women suspected of actions on either side of the spectrum were likely to have been expelled from the liberated area during the Allied reoccupation.⁷⁸

It is not clear what happened after their expulsion: perhaps their experience matched that of certain 'femmes de mauvaise vie' expelled from the Allied *zones des armées* throughout the war, sent to triage camps and kept away from the front.⁷⁹ Thus it can be argued that the aforementioned police reports demonstrate a concern for sexual behaviour above patriotic behaviour, even if the latter is taken into consideration; as well as a desire for short-term punishments. Yet such reports also hint at widespread relations between French women and Germans during the occupation, with often minimal recognition from the authorities of the difficult position in which the population (particularly the female part) found itself. There is little acknowledgement that relationships with Germans, even prostitution, sometimes offered the only means of survival for many women.⁸⁰

Sexual *mauvaise conduite* was the primary form of misconduct, according to the *culture de l'occupé*. Relations with Germans were considered shameful, unpatriotic betrayals; breaches of acceptability and respectability. Yet in reality and in the perceptions of the occupied population, *mauvaise conduite* went beyond the purely sexual, and was not the

⁷⁸ See, for example, ADN 9R1196: Croix, Chasseing, n°135, 7th November 1918.

⁷⁹ Nivet, *Boches*, p.357-8. See also various documents in SHD 17N442.

⁸⁰ Such a view was occasionally shared and understood by the *occupés* themselves, if not the French authorities. Élie Fleury, *Sous la botte. Histoire de la ville de Saint-Quentin pendant l'occupation allemande, août 1914 – février 1917* (Saint-Quentin, 1925, 2 vol.), vol. I, p.247.

sole reserve of women – although they were often still seen as the main perpetrators, with sexual and other misconduct often conflated.

II – General *mauvaise conduite*

Beyond sexual misconduct, *mauvaise conduite* took many other forms, in some ways prequels to what became crystallised as collaboration in the Second World War.

Denunciations

On 10th June 1915, retired teacher and diarist M. Blin from Auchy-lez-Orchies described the ‘sensational’ events taking place at the *hôtel de ville*. The Germans had installed a ‘placard vitré fermé à clef’ for which the accompanying sign stated: ‘Documents à la disposition du public. Lettres anonymes dans lesquelles les Français calomnient (sic) [Blin’s ‘(sic)’] leurs compatriotes.’ Blin was disgusted but perversely hopeful on seeing this, noting: ‘Cette plaie honteuse, étalée au plein jour, cette mis au pilori de lâches accusations formulées dans une crudité révoltante, arrêtera peut-être, désormais, la plume des vilains personnages qui ont l’impudeur d’employer ce procédé indigne de vrais Français.’¹ The following day, many people came to read the anonymous letters,² and on 12th June Blin himself took a closer look, remarking:

Beaucoup de curieux stationnent devant le placard. Je remarque particulièrement deux nouvelles lettres: La 1^{ère} est signée: “*une âme dévouée pour vos soldats*” (Est-ce bien son âme... & un dévouement gratuit?); - la seconde: “*une amie dévouée pour l’Allemagne.*” Elles émanent donc de femmes, comme la plupart des autres.³

Blin therefore highlights another aspect of the *culture de l’occupé*: those who denounced compatriots to the Germans were overwhelmingly perceived to have been women, often those also engaging in sexual misconduct.⁴ Nivet agrees, remarking: ‘Les interrogatoires de rapatriés font fréquemment le lien entre relation intime et collaboration,’⁵ and later, ‘La forme de collaboration la plus lourde de conséquences reste les dénonciations.’⁶ This

¹ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 10th June 1915.

² *Ibid*, 11th June 1915.

³ *Ibid*, 12th June 1915.

⁴ Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.335-7.

⁵ Nivet, ‘Femmes,’ p.309.

⁶ Nivet, *France*, p.298.

conflation of sexual comportment and other forms of *mauvaise conduite* was crucial to the *culture de l'occupé*, and was key to ideas regarding denunciators.

Gromaire put forward both the demographic and cultural arguments for female denunciation, writing that 'Il y avait plus de femmes que d'hommes parmi les mauvais éléments, à cause du surnombre des femmes et des rapports familiaux qui s'établissaient entre ce genre de femmes et les envahisseurs.'⁷ It is true that accusations of denunciation or being an *indicateur* for the Germans swamp archival documents concerning localities across the Nord, whether Évien interrogations or post-war investigations.⁸ The primacy of the *dénonciatrice/délatrice* (both terms were used) is evident. Mme Louvion from Masnières was said to be intimate with a German Sergeant-Major, 'faisait la noce' with him and others, and was also *dénonciatrice*.⁹ Mme Gilain from Croix was ostensibly responsible for denouncing her husband, leading to his imprisonment and subsequent death in prison. It was claimed she did so in order to sleep with Germans.¹⁰ Valentine Gregoire from Hautmont allegedly engaged in intimate relations with the Germans, as did her two daughters Daria and Marguerite, who also underwent a medical visit three times a week and putatively denounced inhabitants hiding copper.¹¹ In Valenciennes, Mlle Leroy,

a eu plusieurs amants. Elle recevait ostensiblement jour et nuit et tirait ses moyens d'existence de la générosité de ses amis de passage [...] Elle était connue sous le nom "Casque d'Or" et pour s'attirer toute l'amitié des allemands elle dénonçait les habitants [...] Aussi était-elle très redoutée et tout le monde en avait peur.¹²

⁷ Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.336.

⁸ See numerous documents in ADN 9R1196; ADHS 4M513, 4M517-20; SHD 17N433 and SHD 19N1571.

⁹ SHD 17N433: Sûreté Générale, III^e Armée Britannique, État-Major, Procès-Verbal, 22nd November 1917.

¹⁰ ADN 9R1196: Croix, Dupis, report n°219, 8th November 1918.

¹¹ US NA Record Group 165: I(b) 349, 7th October 1918.

¹² SHD 17N433: Mission Militaire Française attachée à la 4^e Armée Britannique, Procès-verbal n°397, 3rd March 1918.

Again, it is clear to see the conflation of illegal but unacceptable sexual conduct with genuinely illegal misconduct.

The link between relations/contact with the Germans and denunciation may not have always been justified, as non-occupied French authorities realised. A summary of a convoy of *rapatriés* from Anzin noted that the Germans constantly carried out perquisitions, but the public was wrong to think that they originated from denunciations – every individual entering the *Kommandantur*, often for a personal matter, was immediately suspected of being a denunciator, and every victim of a search immediately accused their neighbour as responsible.¹³ Thus the strong belief in widespread denunciations could be based on misunderstandings, but misunderstandings which formed around the norms of the *culture de l'occupé* – with its notions of good and bad behaviour.

Further examples of French people allegedly denouncing compatriots to the Germans exist for the Nord, although the numbers are not as great as may be imagined: 14 women among those subject to the immediate post-liberation investigations were linked to denunciations, although for others denunciation was often implied;¹⁴ 42 women and one man from the Nord were signalled as possible denunciators/*indicateurs* during the Évian testimony examined;¹⁵ I(b) files relate 8 suspected female denunciators, 3 male, and one entire family.¹⁶ This relatively small number of named denunciators does not, however, given an indication of the full extent of denunciation; many denunciations were anonymous, thus it would have been difficult for *occupés* to provide accurate information on the authors. Yet the perception of frequent denunciation was strong. Indeed, in some localities, such as Douai, it was said that letters of denunciation were so

¹³ ADHS 4M513: report n°788, 22nd February 1917.

¹⁴ ADN 9R1196, *passim*.

¹⁵ ADHS 4M513, *passim*.

¹⁶ US NA Record Group 120: entry 198; Record Group 165.

commonplace that the Germans were both shocked and amused by this.¹⁷ Across the Nord, according to *rapatriés*, the Germans mocked the ‘Français qui se mordent entre eux.’¹⁸ This may be linked to the argument that the Germans actively encouraged denunciation,¹⁹ and does explain the predominance of denunciation as a theme in inter-war occupation histories and memoirs.²⁰

Men were also believed to have been denunciators. The mayor of Saint-Rémy-Chaussée allegedly threatened his *administrés* with denunciation if they did not do what he said.²¹ In Denain, the adjunct to the mayor, M. Delphien, was also said to have threatened people with denunciation, for similar reasons.²² The *curé* of Ainstaing accused the mayor of denouncing the fact that he had hidden photographic equipment,²³ although the investigation into the matter concludes that this was not the case.²⁴ The German-nominated mayor of Boussois, M. Boulogne, was accused by an *administré* of having denounced people to the Germans for being involved in cross-border trade.²⁵ M. Lesaffre, adjunct to the mayor of Comines, appears to have denounced a compatriot to the Germans for hiding his car – this letter of denunciation was also printed in a local paper (*Le Progrès du Nord*) on 12th June 1919 – a few days before investigations began.²⁶

¹⁷ ADHS 4M513: report n°1074, 21st March 1917.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, report n°493, 17th January 1917.

¹⁹ Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.120. However, one Dr Piquet of Lille suggests that despite the pro-denunciation policy, ultimately the Germans did not trust informers, because ‘They know they don’t give their information out of love of the Germans, but simply to satisfy some private revenge.’ Antoinette Tierce, *Between Two Fires. Being a true account of how the author sheltered four escaped British prisoners of war in her house in Lille during the German occupation of that city* (Tonbridge, 1931), (trans.) J. Lewis May, p.162.

²⁰ See Tierce, *Between*, p.46-7, 72, 274.

²¹ ADN 9R1193: Saint Rémy Chaussée, Affaire Lescailliez – Petition from the inhabitants of St Rémy Chaussée to Monsieur le Général Commandant la mission française attachée à l’armée britannique, 11th January 1919; Procès-verbal, 12th March 1919.

²² *Ibid.*, Denain, handwritten summary of the affair, n.a, n.d.

²³ ADN 9R1229: Ainstaing, curé Prussenac to Prefect, 12th December 1918.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Commissaire Spécial de Lille to Prefect, 20th January 1919.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Boussois, Procès-verbal, Couturier, 21st December 1918.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Comines, Procès-verbal (n.a.), 20th June 1919.

The diary of David Hirsch also speaks of denunciation, except it was Hirsch who was the victim: the Germans searched his shop, telling him that they were alerted by a letter of denunciation, which eventually led them to his hidden stock. He had to go to the nearest police station the following day.²⁷ Perhaps the letter was a forgery intended to sow distrust among the population, but that would not explain how the Germans came to know of Hirsch's hidden goods.

It is evident that the local populations believed a large number of denunciations took place during the war, and often that they (as with the aforementioned *cure*) viewed possibly arbitrary German actions against them as a directed 'attack' resulting from denunciations. The difficulty in knowing what really happened can be seen in the explanation given, in a postwar work, for the arrest of Labbé: 'par suite d'une indiscretion ou d'une dénonciation, notre barde Lillois fut arrêté par des agents de la Polizei Wache et incarcéré à la Citadelle, au secret le plus absolu.'²⁸

Many denunciations may have been in the *imaginaire*, but genuine cases did exist. In Tourcoing, according to police reports, in May 1915,

Un individu s'est présenté au poste de Gendarmes [...] il a dénoncé des voisins non-inscrits [...]

Le dénonciateur se vengerait sous prétexte qu'il est agacé par eux parce que son fils travaille chez Selliez à Roubaix, pour le Compte [sic] des allemands [sic].²⁹

Irma Lemaire from Fourmies admitted, during her repatriation interview, that she had denounced the mayor for possessing alcohol and for engaging in gold trafficking in Belgium; she claimed that the mayor got his revenge by stopping her *allocation*.³⁰ In another case, in Mouvaux in December 1916, a French woman was responsible for German gendarmes carrying out minute searches of the local French police station. The

²⁷ Becker, *Journaux*, Hirsch diary, 30th December 1917, p.288.

²⁸ Labbé, *A la Guerre*, p. 2 (préface).

²⁹ AMT H432: Ville de Tourcoing, Poste central de Police, report, 27th May 1915.

³⁰ ADHS 4M513: Notice Individuelle, Irma Lemaire, 28th February 1917.

Germans found nothing, and admitted to the *Commissaire* that they had been acting in response to a letter of denunciation written by a woman. The French police later discovered her identity.³¹

Further, men and women were punished for denunciations in the post-war period. For instance, Eugène Delforge from Monchecourt (an arrondissement of Douai) was found guilty in October 1920 of *intelligence avec l'ennemi*, and subsequently sentenced to three years' imprisonment. This *intelligence* mainly involved denunciations: among others, he denounced a woman for hiding a gun; another woman for travelling without a pass; five hidden French soldiers; and, on numerous occasions, the mayoral adjunct for hiding weapons and harbouring an escaped English aviator.³² That same month, Mme Auvertin of Lille was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for having denounced an *alsacien* man who had been hiding from the Germans; he was subsequently punished with over ten years' imprisonment.³³

The consequences of denunciations could sometimes seemingly outweigh the crime: in Tourcoing in July 1915, French women had denounced French gendarmes Rousseau and Scritte for purportedly calling the Germans 'cochons,' which led to Rousseau's imprisonment for six months (Rousseau claimed the women had misheard the word 'couchez').³⁴ One Mme Anvelier was found guilty of this fact in January 1922, and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment;³⁵ Julie Hoedt was also sentenced for this crime in July 1923, punished (in abstentia) with deportation to 'une enceinte fortifiée.'³⁶ Renée Martinage has demonstrated, using the same judicial documents, that most of the 43 persons condemned from 1919-25 by the *Cour d'assises du Nord* for 'collaboration' had

³¹ ADN 9R750: Commissaire de Police de Mouvaux to Prefect, 6th December 1918.

³² ADN 2U1/444: Cour d'assises du Nord (henceforth CAN), n°73, arrêt du 23 Octobre 1920.

³³ *Ibid.*, n°81, 12th October 1920. For more court documents, see ADN 2U1/445-8; 2U2/515, 2U274/174; 3U281/31-78; 3U303/6; 3U303/7.

³⁴ AMT H4A29: Rapport concernant l'affaire des agents Scrittes and Rousseau, n.d; ADN 9R745: German poster, Tourcoing, 12th July 1915.

³⁵ ADN 2U1/446: CAN, n°3, 23rd January 1922.

³⁶ ADN 2U1/447: CAN, n°57, 13th July 1923.

been found guilty of denunciation.³⁷ There was therefore some truth behind accusations regarding this act, but *mauvaise conduite* also took other forms.

Working for the Germans

Some *occupés* of both sexes were believed to have engaged in voluntary work for the Germans. The true extent of voluntary work cannot be known, but the number of actual volunteers appears to have been low – for example just 157 French civilians were working for the Germans in Tourcoing in late June 1915.³⁸ In Mouvaux, 12 people were reputed to have worked for the Germans – one of whom, Arthur Vercaigne, also spied for them.³⁹

Other evidence suggests that voluntary labour involving a minority of people was commonplace,⁴⁰ but there may be further documentation in German sources. Nevertheless, the I(b) lists contain seven people listed as such, all men, two of whom – a father and son – were said to have been working voluntarily in a munitions factory.⁴¹ Others are listed as working for the Germans, but it is not clear whether this was voluntarily or not – indeed it was often difficult to make this distinction during the occupation because the Germans forced workers to sign documents demonstrating that they had chosen to work for them ‘voluntarily’.⁴² Often occupation accounts note with pride that the German policy of forced labour was implemented precisely because there

³⁷ Martinage, ‘Les collaborateurs,’ pp.102-6.

³⁸ AMT H4A32: mairie to Kommandant, 26th July 1915.

³⁹ ADN 9R750: Commissaire de Police de Mouvaux to Prefect, 6th December 1918.

⁴⁰ See, for example, ADN 15J86: Commission Historique du Nord questionnaire, Loos, 25th August 1922, response to question 97; ADHS 4M513: report n°522, 17th January 1917 (‘Nord’); n°810, 24th February 1917 (Denain); n°828, 28th February 1917 (Fourmies); n°788, 22nd February 1917 (Nord/Valenciennes); n°653, 2nd February 1917; n°989, 14th March 1917 (Aulnoye); n°988, 14th March 1917 (Wazemmes); n°980, 14th March 1917 (Tourcoing); n°951, 10th March 1917 (Fives-Lille/Lille); n°1057, 20th March 1917 (Courrières, Liévin and Valenciennes); n°1069, 22nd March 1917 (St-Amand-les-Eaux); n°1074, 21st March 1917 (St-Amand-les-Eaux and Rennebies); n°1207, 24th April 1917 (Lille); n°1127, 17th April 1917 (Lille); n°1174, 21st April 1917 (Tourcoing); n°1168, 21st March 1917.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, procès-verbal, déclaration de Madame Marie Gaundry, rapatriée de Hautmont, Nord (1918).

⁴² Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.221; ADHS 4 M 413: report n°588, 24th January 1917 (Le Cateau).

were so few volunteers,⁴³ but the fact that there were some, albeit few, voluntary labourers is notable. Such people shocked their fellow *occupés*, who found their actions morally and patriotically repugnant, although it seems likely that those *forced* to carry out war-related tasks by the Germans may have also come under attack from compatriots. Redier cites the testimony of a woman who claims to have been forced to work in the fields for the Germans, along with voluntary workers – she notes that she saw ‘une chose affreuse. Des femmes, des Françaises, se battaient entre elles pour être assises à côté du conducteur allemand!’ The occupied population did not take kindly to seeing this group working for the Germans: ‘Les gens sur la route nous criaient: “Voyez cette racaille, ces ordures qui passent!”’⁴⁴

Among the subjects of the November 1918 investigations, fifteen suspected prostitutes were accused of working voluntarily for the Germans.⁴⁵ In October 1920, one Georges Gomy was sentenced to a year’s imprisonment after being found guilty ‘d’avoir, dans l’arrondissement de Lille, en 1914, 1915, 1916, entretenu avec les sujets d’une puissance ennemie une correspondance, en travaillant volontairement pour le dit ennemi à des travaux de défense militaire.’⁴⁶ In January 1921, Belgian Frédéric Henri Dejaeghere from Fives-Lilles was sentenced to five years’ detention for denunciations, but also for having worked voluntarily for the Germans, particularly commanding a company of other French volunteers to help with the destruction of the *Usine des Forges* in Denain.⁴⁷ A handful of other people were also sentenced for working for the Germans in a variety of capacities, from making sandbags to engaging in German perquisitions and requisitions.⁴⁸ The number of people found guilty of this is low, and the severity of the

⁴³ Becker writes of the *occupés* ‘refus massif du volontariat.’ Becker, *Oubliés*, p.59. Nivet, however, draws on the work of Pierre Baucher to suggest that the number of volunteers may have increased as the occupation continued: idem *France*, p.293.

⁴⁴ Redier, *Allemands*, p.255-6.

⁴⁵ See ADN 9R1196, for example Croix, Dupuis, n°217, and Poreaux, n°240, 8th November 1918. All came from Croix.

⁴⁶ ADN 2U1/444: CAN, n°72, 21st October 1921.

⁴⁷ ADN 2U1/445: CAN, n°20, 21st January 1921.

⁴⁸ See Martinage, ‘Les collaborateurs,’ pp.102-5; ADN 2U1/444-8, *passim*.

punishments is not surprising – working for the Germans without being forced constituted legal collaboration. It is therefore no less shocking that within the *culture de l'occupé*, such volunteers were treated as traitors – a clandestine publication from November 1915 used that exact word to describe ‘ceux et celles qui travaillent pour l'autorité Allemande [et] assistent au pillage de nos villes, mettent nos usines à sac, saccagent le matériel de nos fabriques, assistent au délabrement de la France à la ruine du pays, travaillent contre ceux qui doivent défendre notre Patrie.’⁴⁹

During the occupation, certain municipalities refused to pay, or provide *allocations de secours* to, those who worked freely for the Germans. This was the case in Valenciennes.⁵⁰ Yet elsewhere, such volunteers falsely accused municipal authorities of doing so: in Tourcoing, an employee of the *bureaux de secours aux chômeurs* was arrested by the Germans in April 1917. In a letter to the *Kommandant*, the acting mayor noted that ‘Le motif de cette arrestation consisterait, paraît-il, en ce que cet employé aurait récemment refusé de continuer à verser des secours à un ouvrier travaillant actuellement pour l'Autorité allemande.’ The mayor continued to explain that this employee was merely conforming to the rules dictating that anyone ‘qui se crée des ressources, soit par son travail, soit de toute autre manière, cesse, par cela même, d'avoir droit à l'assistance. La mesure prise au sujet de cet ouvrier n'est donc pas spéciale [...]’⁵¹ As the occupation continued, the reverse occurred – the Germans ordered municipalities to withdraw financial assistance from *occupés* refusing to work for them.⁵² The Germans sometimes promised to provide French workers with a certificate stating that they were

⁴⁹ ADN 3U281/77: 1^{er} C.A. Région, Conseil de Guerre, Plainte n°613, Inventaire des pièces de la procédure suivie contre la nommée Rouvaux née Henneguïn Marguerite Joséphine inculpée d'intelligence avec l'ennemi: *La Liberté – Organe n'ayant passé par aucune censure. Bulletin de propagande patriotique*. 15th November 1915.

⁵⁰ Nivet, *France*, p.294.

⁵¹ AMT H4A32: 1^{er} adjoint fons de Maire Thérin, to Kommandant, 17th April 1915.

⁵² See the case of Marais de Lomme in ADN 9R841: Anjubault to Kommandant of Lille, 18th December 1916.

being forced to work;⁵³ thus the occupiers were aware of the *culture de l'occupé* which perceived French people working for the Germans in a negative light.

In Tourcoing in June 1915, the Germans demanded the municipality provide workers to clean the railway station.⁵⁴ The municipality complied, ordering the police to procure the required number of workers. One of these was M. Cesse, whose wife wrote to the mayor, asking if her husband could be exempted from such work because:

j'ai quatre [sic] petits enfants en bas âge et le cinquième qu'il [sic] va venir et nous somme critiqués [sic] par le monde et nous avons beaucoup de Chagrin tout [sic] les deux et nous voulons réparer [sic] notre honneur si vous le voulez bien j'espère Monsieur Dron que vous ne refuserais [sic] pas ma demande S.V.P. car nous somme [sic] dans la désolations [sic] tout [sic] les deux.⁵⁵

It seems that the source of Mme Cesse's distress was the affront to her family's honour and the attendant criticism resulting from her husband's employment by the Germans. Over two years later, in Roubaix, a diarist demonstrated the disdain in which the majority of *occupés* held those perceived to be working for the Germans of their own free will:

L'opinion bourgeoise n'est pas favorable aux travailleurs roubaisiens qui, se rendant volontairement à la convocation des Allemands, travaillent dans les environs de Wambrechies & Linselles. Outre leur salaire journalier de 7 fr, ils rapportent bois, fèves, haricots, pommes de terre, etc. qu'ils vendent bon prix. humanité [sic], conscience, patriotisme, honnêteté, tous les sentiments qui rendent l'homme digne s'effacent devant un étroit égoïsme!⁵⁶

This reaction to ostensibly voluntary labourers outlasted the occupation, as seen in a letter from one Mlle Munch to the mayor of Lille, dated 9th November 1918. She had spent the occupation with her mother in her village of Pérenchies, and her only brother

⁵³ ADN 9R693: von Heinrich to mayor of Lille, 18th June 1915.

⁵⁴ AMT 4HA32: Directeur de la Voirie Municipale to mayor, 30th June 1915.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Mme Cesse to mayor, 'fin juin 1915.'

⁵⁶ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 20th September 1917.

was killed in a gas attack. The letter praises the courage of the French army and demonstrates her belief that the mayor and Lille suffered a Calvary. She attached a poem she wrote in 1916 against Belgian and French men digging German trenches voluntarily. The poem speaks directly to these workers, starting by ‘vouvoyant’ and then ‘tutoyant,’ suggesting that she was talking to one worker in particular. The men are told that ‘pour vos frères vous faites des tombeaux [...] / Pour de l’argent, oh!’ She invokes a desire for revenge which will manifest itself when French soldiers ‘puniront sans pitié les méchants,’ because:

Tu as souillé mon sol sacré
Tournant des armes à l’Allemagne
Tu es pour tes frères, étranger
Puis, loin de France, va mourir oublié.⁵⁷

This self-identified ‘française de cœur [sic]’ therefore points to the existence of French (and Belgian) civilians working for the Germans. Even if they were not doing so voluntarily, in the eyes of Munch there is no distinction: working for the Germans was treasonous and cowardly. The fact that she mentions money suggests that perhaps she was writing about voluntary labourers, which would certainly explain her hatred and desire for revenge. However, not all *occupés* were as unforgiving as Munch: twelve-year-old Yves Congar, living in occupied Sedan, explained the problem in his entry for 4-7th January 1917:

oui, nous travaillons contre les Français!, oui, nous y sommes forcés! – Ah, Français, ne venez pas nous dire après la guerre: “c’est honteux, demi-boches, qui travaillez pour eux”, car on vous répondrait: “pourquoi avez-vous abandonné lâchement ce sol de la patrie que vous avez juré de défendre jusqu’à la mort ?.” [sic]⁵⁸

Correct as Congar may be, there were nevertheless a small number of genuine volunteers, who evoked great emotions amongst the occupied population, but who have been all but wiped out from the occupation histories and other occupation accounts.

⁵⁷ AML 4H291: Mlle Munch to mayor, 9th November 1918.

⁵⁸ Congar, *Journal*, p.164.

Espionage

Even rarer than suggestions of voluntary labour were accusations that certain *occupés* worked for the German police or secret service. Although some men were suspected of and later charged with *espionage/intelligence avec l'ennemi*,⁵⁹ once again it was believed that most potential spies were women – particularly those ostensibly engaging in sexual misconduct. A handful of women reappear in the testimony of repatriated people from Lille, mentioned as potential spies, usually the mistresses of Germans (including the Prince of Bavaria) who had allegedly moved freely within and outside the occupied area.⁶⁰ It seems possible that some such women were indeed spying for the Germans, whereas other accusations were probably rumour based on pre-existing relations with the Germans. For instance, Mme Pourez-Conteran from Roubaix was labelled by a *rapatrié* as being susceptible 'de se livrer à l'espionnage' because she had 'relations intimes' with German officers and had been the mistress of *Kommandant* Hoffmann, for whom she served as an interpreter.⁶¹ A considerable number of similar accusations are found in Évian testimony, I(b) suspect lists, and the October-November 1918 investigations.⁶²

Non-occupied French authorities were cautious about such reports, especially the commonplace conflation of sexual and illegal misconduct. In a note to interpreters attached to the British Army regarding their duties in the event of an advance, interpreter Letore drew on his experience from the spring 1917 advances, warning:

l'expérience m'a prouvé que la rumeur publique pouvait faire trop rapidement et par conséquent injustement, des espionnes de toutes les femmes ou filles de mauvaise vie qui ont eu des rapports intimes avec les Allemands. Ces femmes et ces filles doivent être suspectes, c'est entendu; ce ne sont pas sûrement des espionnes [...] les personnes qui accusent ont

⁵⁹ See, for example, ADN 9R1196: Croix, Dupuis, n°291, 9th November 1918; ADN 2U1/445: CAN, 21st October 1920, et passim.

⁶⁰ ADHS 4M513: report n°971, 18th March 1917; n°927, 9th May 1917; n°894, 7th March 1917; n°953, 12th March 1917.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, report n°104, 19th March 1917.

⁶² See ADHS 4M513; ADN 9R11-7; US NA Record Group 120: Entry 198, passim. At least 36 potential female spies in the Nord are listed in these sources, although the distinction between informer, denunciator and spy/German agent is blurred.

beaucoup souffert de la brutalité boche [... et] peuvent inconsciemment exagérer les faits. Celles qu'elles accusent ont beaucoup souffert aussi. [...] Personne n'a plus que moi horreur de ces femmes qui peuvent descendre si bas; l'horreur n'exclut pas la pitié cependant; certainement elle ne doit pas nous entraîner [sic] à l'injustice.⁶³

This demonstrates the seriousness with which non-occupied French, especially military, authorities regarded accusations of espionage; but also that these authorities sometimes held more nuanced views than the *occupés* themselves. The *culture de l'occupé*, with its strict norms, its simplistic, Manichean labelling and its quick judgements, largely ignored the subtleties of occupied life with which most people struggled. Given the complexities of occupation, and the fact that some – primarily those engaging in *mauvaise conduite* – do not appear to have bought into the *culture de l'occupé*, perhaps there was a performative element to occupied culture; or at the very least to accusations made by *rapatriés*, and later by the liberated French.

Despite this, Allied authorities and the occupied population did seem to agree on what constituted negative behaviour, firmly situating the norms of the *culture de l'occupé* within a wider national-patriotic framework. The Belgian military outlined those to be considered suspect or undesirable in a 1917 publication concerning the future reoccupation of German-controlled territory. This status was conferred to anyone: suspected of currently being in relations with the enemy; voluntarily in the service of the enemy or having 'méchamment servi sa politique ou ses desseins'; having given refuge to enemy agents or having facilitated their mission; having hidden enemy soldiers or agents or having given them civilian clothes during the German retreat; having 'méchamment,' by denouncing a real or imagined fact, exposed someone to enemy searches, investigations or punishments; having given pigeons or telegraph installations to the enemy; signalled as having had intimate or friendly relations with enemy subjects during the war, or having given them moral or material support; having voluntarily given the

⁶³ SHD 17N393: 'Devoirs des interprètes en cas d'avance. Conseils de l'O.I. LETORE aux Interprètes du IVe Corps' (n.d.).

enemy, for whatever reason, any material, merchandise, object or vehicle with direct military implications; having voluntarily given the enemy CRB goods; having engaged in fraud for the benefit of the enemy; being of enemy nationality or having married an enemy subject; being an Allied deserter; breaking the Allied-imposed rules.⁶⁴

Apart from the last two categories, the types of people listed here comprise almost all those engaging in *mauvaise conduite*. It appears that this list was drawn from the testimony of *rapatriés*, representing an acknowledgment of actions genuinely occurring in occupied territory.

These forms of behaviour, breaches of occupied respectability, had been greatly stigmatised throughout the war, and when the liberation came, many *Nordistes* informed the authorities of suspect individuals. This is itself a fascinating subject of study, one which allows a better understanding of the male specificity within the notion of *mauvaise conduite*.

⁶⁴ SHD 17N394: *Instructions pour les Administrations Communales dans les Communes Réoccupées* (Imprimerie du G.Q.G, Armée Belge, 1917), II: 'Recherches des agents de l'ennemi et des personnes suspectes ou des indésirables.'

III – Post-war Denunciations and the Male Specificity

Denunciations from October 1918

Liberation and post-liberation inquiries were not always carried out on the initiative of the French authorities or individual gendarmes: often it was the inhabitants themselves who called for investigations. M. Albert, an interpreter attached to the British Army, noted that upon arriving in the commune of Eccles on 11th November 1918, he received a verbal complaint from numerous inhabitants accusing three inhabitants of having worked for the Germans as spies and denunciations. He asked for a written, signed complaint, which he received the following morning.¹

Here the inhabitants evidently felt a sense of urgency, a need to inform French authorities of *mauvaise conduite* as soon as possible, and no doubt also felt a desire for punishment, albeit at the hands of the French authorities and the judicial system. Becker sees such denunciations in a gendered light, arguing that it was as if, ‘une fois la guerre terminée, on revenait à une dichotomie ordinaire: non seulement les héros auraient souffert sur les champs de bataille, mais ils auraient été trahis par des ennemis de l’intérieur, leurs femmes.’² Yet it seems that more complaints were made during the war by *rapatriés* than after the cessation of hostilities.

Nevertheless, post-war complaints, attempts to get those suspected of *mauvaise conduite* punished by the French authorities, are much more frequent than popular violence and physical reprisals, and in many cases were made a surprisingly long time after the liberation. Such complaints will here be considered as denunciations, following the definition of Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately of ‘spontaneous communications from individual citizens to the state [...] containing accusations of wrongdoing by other

¹ ADN 9R1197: Eccles, Leydet, procès-verbal, 14th November 1918. Testimony of M. Durand, ‘interprète attaché au 12em [Lancier] Anglais.’

² Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.247.

citizens or officials and implicitly or explicitly calling for punishment.³ Indeed, gendarme reports occasionally mention that the subject of an inquiry was brought to their attention via ‘dénunciation.’⁴ The phenomenon of post-war denunciations, distinct from denunciations made to the Germans during the occupation,⁵ is extremely interesting. These post-war denunciations can be understood in the context of the war’s effect on society, for denunciation has flourished in war and occupation in the twentieth century. During the First and Second World Wars:

the new situation of “total” mobilization of society in the belligerent countries produced new patterns of behavior that included widespread denunciation (even in nondenunciatory England) of spies, saboteurs, Germans, suspected Fifth Columnists, and so on. Of course, in wartime all states insist that patriotism – a citizen’s allegiance to the nation-state – override all other loyalties.⁶

This is not to say, as shall be demonstrated, that all denunciations of *mauvaise conduite* were motivated by patriotic sentiment, nor that they were necessarily true accounts of events. Nevertheless, these post-war denunciations are implicitly understood – by the authors and, it seems, the authorities – as the opposite of the occupation denunciations (denouncing compatriots to the Germans), although the symbolic, linguistic difference between *délation* (perceived as a negative act of betrayal and treason) and *dénunciation* (seen as a patriotic-civic duty) is rarely present.⁷

Denunciation of *mauvaise conduite* took numerous forms. Most frequently, inhabitants signed petitions, in large numbers, decrying the behaviour of notables (usually the mayor

³ Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, ‘Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History,’ *The Journal of Modern History*, 68:4 (December 1996), p.747.

⁴ See, for example, ADN 9R1196: Wasquehal, Haquet, n°18, 31st October 1919.

⁵ Although denunciation of war profiteers also took place across unoccupied France. P. J. Flood, *France 1914-1918: Public Opinion and the War Effort* (London, 1990), p. 125; François Bouloc, *Les profiteurs de guerre, 1914-18* (Brussels, 2008), *passim*.

⁶ Fitzpatrick and Gellately, ‘Introduction,’ p.761-2.

⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s,’ *The Journal of Modern History*, 68:4 (December 1996), p.831. In the archival sources for the Nord, *délation* is rarely used, with *dénunciation* and *dénoncer* used to express both occupation *délation* and post-war *dénunciation*.

or the personnel of the *mairie*) during the occupation, and calling for further investigations. One such example is a petition from inhabitants of the commune of Saint-Rémy-Chaussée to the ‘Général Commandant la mission française attachée à l’armée britannique,’ sent on 11th January 1919:

Les soussignés, habitants de la commune de St Rémy Chaussée, [sic] canton de Berlaimont Nord, [sic] ont l’honneur d’appeler votre attention sur les faits et agissements du maire de leur commune pendant la guerre. Ils ont sérieusement [sic] à se plaindre des vexations de tout qu’ils ont eu à subir, et n’hésitent pas à déclarer qu’ils ont souffert au moins autant que de l’occupation étrangère.⁸

This petition has fifty signatures, and accuses the mayor of being involved in arbitrary requisitions, of refusing to pay the inhabitants the military and other *allocations* to which they were entitled, of a ‘despicable’ personal attitude towards the Germans (including providing them with food and other goods), and of ‘La facilité avec laquelle il livrait aux allemands [sic] les hommes, les femmes, les jeunes filles, les dénonçant en cas de refus, et leur faisant infliger des amendes ou de la prison.’⁹ Here is an example of the distinction between types of denunciation: the mayor’s alleged wartime denunciation, a betrayal of compatriots, contrary to this petition’s patriotic denunciation. Of course, it is possible that the author and signatories did not perceive of their actions as denunciation, even in a positive sense, but it can be viewed as such.¹⁰

Yet the subsequent investigation into both the writing of the petition and the mayor’s actions during the occupation highlights the complexities of the situation. Mixed witness testimony of varying reliability abounds, and the role of public rumour is evident. One M. Raviart stated in his police interview that: ‘Je reproche au Maire Lescailliez de m’avoir désigné pour travailler pour les allemands, [sic] malgré ma volonté,’ and demonstrates his

⁸ ADN 9R1193: Saint-Rémy-Chaussée, Affaire Lescailliez, Petition from the inhabitants of St Rémy Chaussée to Monsieur le Général Commandant la mission française attachée à l’armée britannique, 11th January 1919. Original emphasis.

⁹ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

¹⁰ Fitzpatrick, ‘Signals,’ p.865: ‘many writers of accusatory letters undoubtedly saw the practice as something other than denunciation.’

belief that the mayor refused to pay his *allocation* even though his daughter was ill – just one of many such statements in this file. Such accusations may indeed be true, but they may also reflect an inability of the general population to comprehend the difficulties facing mayors and municipal administrations, and the way in which the population could exaggerate the ability of such notables to resist the Germans (discussed later). However, his testimony ends with an extremely common phrasing: ‘J’ai entendu dire que ce Maire [sic] avait trafiqué avec les boches [sic] mais je ne pouvais vous donner aucun renseignement à ce sujet.’¹¹ This demonstrates that public rumour surrounding the actions of the mayor was widespread, and there is a sense that, even though Raviart did not know anything of the mayor’s alleged commerce with the Germans, the fact that he had heard people talking about this made it worth mentioning – and almost made it a truth unto itself.

Rumour

Writing about post-war judicial inquiries into ‘inciviques’ in Belgium during the occupation, Thierry Lemoine noted that the majority of investigations were ‘conclues par un non-lieu ou un sans suite,’ which highlights the primacy of rumour; but, Lemoine asks, ‘l’état de guerre n’est-il pas caractérisé par un régime d’incertitude générale, pesant tant sur les conditions matérielles des lendemains que sur les “faits” qui ne sont plus communiqués qu’au compte-gouttes par des médias censurés?’¹²

Lemoine notes that such an atmosphere was even stronger in an occupied area cut off from the rest of the world, craving information, and thus a return to the oral tradition – including rumour – is to be expected. He goes on, drawing on the arguments of Marc Bloch, according to whom ‘les périodes de guerre sont des moments privilégiés pour “le surgissement au jour de manifestations de la conscience collective émanant de sociétés

¹¹ ADN 9R1193: Saint-Rémy-Chaussée, Affaire Lescailliez, Vernet, procès-verbal, 24th March 1919. Statement of M. Raviart.

¹² Thierry Lemoine, ‘L’émergence d’une vision stéréotypée de l’incivique à travers les archives de l’Auditorat militaire (1914-1919),’ in *Patrie*, p.186.

fragilisées et rendues vulnérables par le conflit, prêtes à régresser dans ces circonstances vers des stades sociaux antérieurs”.’ Investigations were carried out in liberated Belgium for military reasons, but also to satisfy public opinion, tormented by four years of occupation, humiliation and privation.¹³ It seems plausible that the authorities investigating *mauvaise conduite* in northern France had similar motives, even if the public results (i.e. judicial cases) were considerably less numerous than in Belgium.¹⁴ As Lemoine points out, no matter what the content of the rumours visible in the sources, these demonstrate the emotion, mainly the fears and the desires, of those living in the occupied area. In hiding behind rumour, the majority of witnesses could publicly express their prejudices and fantasies, however unrespectable.¹⁵ This explains how a largely ‘bourgeoise’ and Christian society – with all this implies regarding repressed sexuality – could seemingly easily speak of ‘orgies’ and hedonistic, debauched parties, which mixed ‘excès de table et de boissons’ to create ‘les plaisirs licencieux.’¹⁶ Such a perception of *mauvaise conduite* has already been demonstrated to have existed in occupied France. Further, Lemoine argues that public rumour plays a role in social cohesion – against the deterioration of social links resulting from war, rumour has a binding effect as members of a social group bond through sharing rumours based on exclusion (*inciviques* in Belgium¹⁷ and those associated with *mauvaise conduite* in the Nord). Lydia Flem poses the question, ‘pourquoi la rumeur?’ Her response is: ‘Pour dire la peur et lui donner un visage. Pour énoncer le désir et l’angoisse, et dénoncer un bouc émissaire et surtout pour se sentir solidaires.’¹⁸ Rumours reflect social tensions rather than creating them, and offer a means of circulation for collective fantasies. Indeed, Bloch himself noted that rumours

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.186.

¹⁴ For the punishment of ‘inciviques’ in Belgium, see Rousseaux and van Ypersele, *Patrie*.

¹⁵ Lemoine, ‘L’émergence,’ p.186.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.187.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.192.

¹⁸ Lydia Flem, ‘Bouche bavarde et oreille curieuse,’ *Le genre humain*, 5: la rumeur (1982), p.14, cited in *ibid.*, p.192-3.

only propagate on one condition: ‘trouver dans la société où elle se répand un bouillon de culture favorable.’¹⁹

Rumours are a form of perception, ‘une perception inexacte, ou mieux encore une perception inexactement interprétée.’²⁰ However, labelling testimony rumour ‘est en fait une déqualification,’ assuring that it ‘ne mérite pas d’être crue.’²¹ Yet ‘L’existence d’un phénomène rumoral’ around a subject should not invalidate the possibility of its existence, ‘la rumeur ne faisant alors que transmettre des informations hors des voies officielles.’²² As Bloch noted, ‘Il n’y a pas de bon témoin; il n’y a guère de déposition exacte en toutes ses parties.’²³ Rumour should thus be seen as a window into the world of those creating and spreading the information, rather than dismissed as untrustworthy hearsay. Potential rumours surrounding *mauvaise conduite* offer opportunities to understand the mindset of the occupied population, and a means by which the *culture de l’occupé* can be studied.

Mobile Motives: Duty or Revenge?

It is important to take into consideration the potential motives of petitions and letters of denunciation sent to French authorities in the post-war period. In the Lescailliez affair, there is some evidence to suggest that more than a sense of patriotic duty lay behind the petition. One M. Bernier states that the author of the petition, M. Martin, came to his house in March 1919 and asked the family if they would like to sign. Bernier said that he knew nothing of the affair, but Martin added, “Si vous voulez dire ce que je vais vous dire, vous serez récompensé.” Bernier maintained that he had nothing to say, so Martin

¹⁹ Marc Bloch, *Réflexions d’un historien sur les fausses nouvelles de la guerre* (Paris, 1999; originally 1921), p.16-17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.40.

²¹ Pascal Froissart, *La rumeur: Histoire et fantasmes* (Paris, 2002), p.14.

²² Emmanuel Taïeb, ‘Des rumeurs de guerre,’ *Quaderni*, 49 (Winter 2002-3), p.7-8.

²³ Bloch, *Réflexions*, p.10.

left.²⁴ This calls into question the validity of the signatures, and possibly even the later witness statements – although naturally this single statement could be false, an attempt to defend the mayor and sully the reputation of Martin. Indeed, it must be noted that it was Lescaillez himself who told the gendarmes that they should interview Bernier, stating on 11th April 1919 that the previous day three inhabitants (one of whom was Bernier) had come to him, telling him that ‘si on nous interrogait au sujet de la petition [sic ...] nous dirions ce que nous savons à ce sujet.’²⁵ Overall, the statements are contradictory and confusing, a fact to which a handwritten summary of the case attests.²⁶ A similar problem can be seen in the investigation into alleged *mauvaise conduite* of the mayor of Bachy. A letter of complaint signed by numerous inhabitants was sent to the *Préfet*, but the *Commissaire Spéciale de Lille* noted that Samain ‘a la réputation dans la commune d’être un plaignant systématique.’²⁷

Thus it is impossible to tell if petitions resulted from genuine grievances and a desire for punishment, possibly resulting from a misunderstanding of the position of the mayor during the occupation. They may have been what Fitzpatrick classifies as ‘manipulative’ denunciations²⁸ – some form of vengeance, an attempt at personal gain, or political manoeuvring. This latter point was a commonplace defence of the mayors or municipal councillors against allegations of *mauvaise conduite*. The mayor of Crèvecœur-sur-Escaut was accused of having close relations with the Germans, putting personal interest before that of his *administrés*, and even threatening them with German punishments. In a letter to the *Sous-Préfet* of Cambrai, the mayor denied all wrongdoing, calling the petition ‘un véritable tissu de mensonges qui ne peut résister à un examen sérieux’ and stating: ‘C’est d’ailleurs la campagne électorale qui commence, menée par mes ennemis

²⁴ ADN 9R1193: Saint-Rémy-Chaussée, Affaire Lescaillez, procès-verbal, Vernet, 12th April 1919. Statement of M. Bernier.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, procès-verbal, Vernet and Hudault, 12th April 1919. Statement of M. Lescaillez.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, handwritten note, n.d., n.a.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Bachy, Commissaire Spécial de Lille to Prefect, 11th August 1919.

²⁸ Fitzpatrick, ‘Signals,’ p.863.

politiques.²⁹ He went on to explain that he had made enemies in his political career because of the greed, desire for money, and jealousy of one's neighbour rife amongst the peasantry.³⁰ These enemies were using the occupation (and the difficult position in which the mayor found himself) against him, for their own benefit rather than out of any moral-patriotic sentiment. It is not clear whether the French authorities believed this version of events, but they did want to discover the truth – the *Sous-Préfet* of Cambrai asked the *Préfet* for an 'enquête contradictoire' into the actions of the mayor.³¹

Other examples of an alleged political understanding of denunciations existed in Comines,³² and Ligny-en-Cambrésis – where, in June 1920, the municipality ordered the replacement of the teacher of the local boys' school for general occupation misconduct.³³ The *Inspecteur de l'enseignement primaire* argued that the teacher was a pawn in a political game: the new municipal council was formed of *poilus* who wanted to 'mettre à mal l'ancien maire,' but the latter defended himself and threatened the councillors with sensational revelations, 'Alors on s'est ravisé, et on a trouvé un bouc émissaire: l'instituteur.'³⁴

It is unsurprising that the accused denied wrongdoing, and understandable that politicians would accuse their political enemies of being behind the denunciations or accusations. Whether true in these cases, it can be assumed that such motivations were behind some denunciations and accusations, hinting at the rapid degeneration of the *Union Sacrée* during the immediate post-Armistice period.

²⁹ ADN 9R1193: Crèvecœur-sur-Escaut, mayor to Sous-Préfet of Cambrai, 5th October 1919. Original emphasis.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, Crèvecœur-sur-Escaut, Sous-Préfet of Cambrai to Prefect, 17th October 1919.

³² ADN 9R1229: Comines, Procès-verbal, Biarnais, n°77, 4th July 1919. Testimony of M. Lesaffre.

³³ *Ibid.*, Ligny-en-Cambrésis, Extrait du Registre aux Délibérations du Conseil Municipal de la Commune de Ligny-en-Cambrésis, séance of 10th July 1920.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Inspecteur de l'enseignement primaire of Cambrai to Directeur départemental, 19th August 1920.

Men who had been at the front during the war also signed post-war petitions against the actions of mayors and municipal councillors. These men, by definition absent during the occupation, could only formulate opinions based on rumour, demonstrating its strength and centrality to the *culture de l'occupé*. This was the case in Bachy³⁵ and Râche.³⁶ However, the most striking case is that of Denain, where two adjuncts to the mayor were 'l'objet de plaints émanant de la "Ligue des Poilus" de cette ville.'³⁷ Thus it was the former combatants who led the campaign against these two notables – not only did they write letters to French authorities, but they carried out their own investigations.³⁸ This demonstrates the strength of feeling among those who did not live through the occupation, for whom the conduct of the occupied population (especially notables) was seen as an important issue – and *mauvaise conduite*, in their eyes, had to be punished. Whether this emanated from a feeling of solidarity with the occupied population, a desire to help them right the wrongs of the occupation, or more simply suspicion of the occupied population,³⁹ is unclear. What is clear, however, is that these denunciations were understood in terms of civic-patriotic duty: 'Je prends sous ma responsabilité de vous écrire cette lettre, pour vous donner quelques renseignements sur la mauvaise administration de la commune.'⁴⁰ Denunciations were also an expression of outrage that the justice system had not investigated or punished the suspect individuals up to this point.

Anonymous denunciations also became formulised in postcards, the front of which comprised a photo of the mayor with German soldiers, the back containing a brief accusation. This was the origin of the investigation in Crèvecœur-sur-Escaut: one

³⁵ ADN 9R1193: Bachy, Petition to Delugé Préfectoral, 20th July 1919; Petition to Commandant de place de Bachy, n.d.; Petition to Président du Conseil Ministère de l'Intérieur [sic], 27th May 1919; Report, Rossey, 29th July 1918.

³⁶ ADN 9R1229: Râches, Procès-verbal, Déburcaus and Hatte, 17th February 1919.

³⁷ ADN 9R1193: Denain, Préfet to Général Commandant 1^{re} Corps d'Armée, 2nd October 1919.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Sous-Préfet of Valenciennes to Prefect, 23rd September 1919.

³⁹ During the war, 'many *poilus* felt that the issue of collaboration, "la question des embochés", required prompt action once the fighting had ceased.' Englander, 'French Soldier,' p.65.

⁴⁰ ADN 9R1129: Mons-en-Pévèle, Césaire Lemaire to Prefect, 27th April 1919.

postcard sent to the *Préfet* involved a photo showing the mayor and his family standing in a courtyard with German gendarmes. The message on the back is short and simple: ‘Quand comptez-vous révoquer ce maire vendu aux Boches,’ signed by ‘un indigné’ (Fig. 3.1-3.2).⁴¹ Another copy of this postcard was sent to the *Ministre de l’Intérieur*, although it is also anonymous, the handwriting appears different, as is the message: it is longer, containing detail on what the mayor and his family were alleged to have done wrong, and it also numbers the subjects of the photo, listing their names (Fig. 3.3-3.4).⁴² One of the most bizarre anonymous denunciations is a twenty-verse song regarding the actions of the mayor of Marcq-en-Barœul, a copy of which was forwarded to the *Préfet* by the *Commissaire de police* of Marcq-en-Barœul. It was accompanied by a photo showing the mayor’s son sitting down next to a German soldier (Fig. 4). In the letter the *Commissaire* stated that because of the photo and the song, ‘il sera, très vraisemblablement, beaucoup parlé de ces hommes dans la période électorale prochaine.’⁴³ The political implications of occupation (mis)conduct are therefore evident. The song itself is entitled ‘Complainte dédiée au Maire de Marcq,’ and speaks of a village abandoned by its mayor who, out of fear of imprisonment, ‘trahit ce que commande/La responsabilité’ and ‘Abdique l’autorité.’⁴⁴ Mention is made of one of his sons, presumably the one in the photo, who ‘fait bon ménage/Hélas avec l’étranger.’⁴⁵ The mayor is accused of being too friendly with the Germans, of helping them choose hostages, and of not resisting German demands (particularly linked to the *enlèvements* of 1916). The penultimate verse sums up the way a mayor was *supposed* to have acted during the occupation:

Il faillait à la contrainte
Céder, c’est bien reconnu
Mais d’abord lutter sans crainte
Pour notre droit méconnu.
Car sans cette résistance

⁴¹ ADN 9R1193: Crèvecœur-sur-Escaut, postcard to Prefect, stamped 31st July 1919. Original emphasis.

⁴² *Ibid.*, postcard to Ministre de l’Intérieur, stamped 12th July 1919.

⁴³ ADN 9R1229: Marcq-en-Barœul, Commissaire de police to Prefect, 13th September 1919.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Complainte dédiée au Maire de Marcq, first verse.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, third verse.

Le calme est cher acheté
Ce n'est plus de la prudence
Et c'est de la lâcheté.⁴⁶

This is a rather surprising admission in an accusatory denunciation: the author recognises that, of course, resisting *all* German demands was impossible during the occupation – but a *symbolic* resistance, some form of protest or attempt at negotiating, was needed *before* the inevitable acquiescence. This attitude was widely understood and accepted (see ‘Respectable Resistance’ chapter). Thus mayors who acquiesced to German demands too readily, without protest, could be perceived as having behaved badly: this was *mauvaise conduite*, worthy of post-war denunciation, even if it was not total ‘collaboration.’ Precisely because everything that happened during the occupation was ambiguous – everyone dealing with the Germans in one way or another – former *occupés* were always susceptible to post-war questioning. This contrasts somewhat with post-Second-World-War France, where there was a conscious taking of sides and a clearer sense of who had done what; after the occupation of 1914-1918, many had engaged in some relations with the Germans as well as some resistance, so it was often up to the courts to decide one’s fate in symbolic, representative cases.

Women who were sexually involved with or had other relations with Germans also faced anonymous denunciations, although these were made to gendarmes already in the process of investigating suspect sexual behaviour, immediately after the liberation.⁴⁷ The phenomenon of *anonymous* denunciation raises further questions: why did certain people denounce anonymously? Does this make the denunciations any less legitimate or more suspect? It could be the case that the stigma of denunciation as a negative act (*délation*), evident throughout the occupation, still held some power even over apparently ‘patriotic’ *dénonciations* – causing the authors to remain anonymous. Perhaps these denunciators feared reprisals if the denounced discovered their authorship,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, nineteenth verse.

⁴⁷ See, for example, ADN 9R1196: Wasquehal, Haquet, n°18, 31st October 1919, et passim.

an understandable fear regarding denunciations of notables. Maybe some anonymous denunciations were unfounded, 'manipulative' denunciations intended to damage the reputation of the subject. For anonymous denunciations on postcards containing photographs of notables with Germans, perhaps a French person simply saw the photograph and perceived it as an example of *mauvaise conduite*, without considering the circumstances behind it or even knowing any details whatsoever about the people in the photo. Anonymous denunciations, just like all others, nevertheless demonstrate an apparent desire for the punishment of questionable occupation conduct, as well as a belief that the French judicial system would help in this regard (even if it had not done so up until the time of writing). Thus this *mauvaise conduite* is seen as being so reprehensible that the highest echelons of French power should be concerned with it.

Many of those who wrote denunciations to the French authorities, who gave statements to investigating gendarmes, and even the French authorities themselves, seemed not to understand the difficult position in which municipal administrations (and aid organisations) found themselves during the occupation. One apparent example can be found in the 'affaire Berteaux' in Fourmies. M. Berteaux was the 'secrétaire de Mairie délégué central du service du ravitaillement' during the occupation. He was accused after the liberation – following a denunciation⁴⁸ – of having been involved in commerce with the Germans, giving a German officer 400,000 francs, setting up a shop which sold only German goods at prices the local population could not afford, and selling the *comité de ravitaillement's* goods (destined exclusively for the local population) to the Germans.⁴⁹ Further, he allegedly often stated 'Je suis neutre,' exchanged gifts with German officers, and his wife made German flags.⁵⁰ The investigating policeman interviewed Berteaux in June 1919, and noted that he did not deny the accusations. Berteaux stated: 'Si j'ai livré

⁴⁸ ADN 9R1193: Fourmies, affaire Berteaux, seemingly Secrétariat Général du Comité du Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées to Prefect, 21st June 1919.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Fourmies, Commissaire de police to Directeur de la Sûreté Générale, Paris, 27th November 1918; Commissaire de police to Sous-Préfet à Avesnes, 15th June 1919.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Fourmies, Lieutenant Gallissot to Prefect, 12th June 1919.

des marchandises aux diverses allemands [sic] c'est parce que j'étais obligé de "mettre de l'huile dans la machine" [...] Je suis couvert par les délégués américains [sic] et ceux du comité Hispano-néerlandais.⁵¹

Not only did Berteaux himself explicitly state that some form of *mauvaise conduite* was necessary to 'oil the machine' – so did his fellow *comité de ravitaillement* members. Defending the actions of Berteaux, one M. Droulers wrote a letter to the President of the CANF, stating that:

Je me fais un devoir de vous signaler la situation pénible qui est faite à M. Berteaux par une enquête de gendarmerie qui donne satisfaction aux plus basses rancunes et qui dénote une ignorance absolue des difficultés et des obligations auxquelles il ne pouvait se soustraire vis-à-vis des allemands [sic] sans compromettre gravement le fonctionnement du ravitaillement.⁵²

He later states: 'Le cas de M. Berteaux est celui de nombreux délégués, on semble ignorer la nécessité de leurs rapports avec l'ennemi et la compromission qu'ils devaient subir dans l'intérêt de la population.' Therefore not only were some form of relations, obviously friendly ones, not unpatriotic, but they were necessary for the correct functioning of aid work. Berteaux's actions were thus legitimate and successful. This view was reinforced by the summary of the CRB séance of 27th April 1919, at Vervins, its first meeting since the liberation. Unanimous support was expressed for Berteaux, who was said to 'a conduit à bien pendant trois années et demie une tâche à la fois très lourde et très délicate exigeant une dépense de temps et de force considérables et que, grâce à sa clairvoyance avisée, il a réussi à franchir les pas les plus difficiles résultant du fait de l'occupation.'⁵³ More striking is the CRB's clear directive to its former delegates regarding the way in which the French government would understand its actions during the occupation. Delegates had a duty to combat any suspicion, insult or stain against the organisation, especially from non-occupied compatriots.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, Fourmies, M. Droulers to Président du CANF, Brussels, 28th May 1919.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Fourmies, summary of the séance of 27th April 1919 of the 'délégués régionaux de l'ancienne administration C.R.B. réunis en l'Hôtel de Ville de VERVINS.'

Des confusions et des incompréhensions regrettables doivent appeler notre intervention et nous ne devons pas supporter qu'une analogie, fût-elle lointaine et indulgente, s'établisse dans certains esprits entre notre rôle et celui des trafiquants, **que nos rapports obligés avec les services allemandes soient confondus avec des compromissions intéressées et coupables.**⁵⁴

This is an explicit admission that those who did not suffer the occupation would not be able to understand the complexities of the situation, that there was a distinction between administrative relations with the Germans which were necessary for the good of the local area, and outright unpatriotic and morally suspect relations. Yet those writing petitions, involved in denunciations, and giving statements to investigating gendarmes often themselves do not appear to have seen a difference between the most extreme forms of *mauvaise conduite* and *accommodement*. This was perhaps because they were not part of the administration, so simply were not aware of the extreme difficulties faced, but possibly also because they genuinely judged certain acts to be morally repugnant, whether there were 'mitigating circumstances' or not. This was the uncompromising *culture de l'occupé*.

There were accusations of aiding the Germans in various ways against numerous municipalities, such as that of Saint-Rémy-Chaussée, where the mayor was accused of aiding the Germans in requisitions, of refusing to pay *allocations* or paying them late, and of being responsible for forced labour.⁵⁵ This may demonstrate the population's ignorance of the state of municipal finances which had been completely drained by the Germans, and of the fact that mayors *had* to sign German documents or face severe reprisals. Some *occupés* seem to have held an exaggerated idea of the ability of municipalities to resist German demands. The 'municipalisation du pouvoir' was encouraged by the Germans so that they could 'faire plus facilement pression pour

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* My emphasis.

⁵⁵ ADN 9R1193: St Rémy Chaussée, Petition to the Général Commandant la mission française attachée à l'armée britannique, 11th January 1919. See also *ibid.*, Denain; ADN 9R1229: Mons-en-Pévèle.

l'exécution de leurs exigences.⁵⁶ With increased municipal power came increased responsibility, and thus greater chances of being accused of wrongdoing by the population at large. Indeed, the non-occupied French authorities were aware of the complexity of the administrative situation and did stress that dealings with the Germans did not automatically comprise 'complaisance' with the Germans – sometimes municipalities had to co-operate to avoid reprisals, and this was not a legitimate incrimination against a mayor or civil authority, especially for 'les magistrats d'un ordre modeste.'⁵⁷

However, some accusations are more likely to be true than others, particularly those corroborated by numerous witnesses from all walks of life, recorded by police investigations. Accusations that may not be true, or were proven false nevertheless provide an insight into the *culture de l'occupé*, specifically popular perceptions. They attest to a widespread belief in misconduct, and an acknowledgement of the representational and conceptual framework born of occupation and crystalised by the liberation, which the authors of untrue accusations used to their advantage.

Political Misconduct?

What Nivet calls 'collaboration politique'⁵⁸ – municipal, administrative forms of *mauvaise conduite* perpetrated mainly by men – were taken seriously by the French authorities. Time-consuming investigations took place in at least thirty communes, all but two of which involved accusations of questionable occupation conduct on the part of the mayor, the municipal council, adjuncts to the mayor, secretaries to the *mairie*, or *gardes-champêtres*.⁵⁹ Only six of these thirty investigations concluded that the

⁵⁶ Bukowski, 'Cambrai,' p.60.

⁵⁷ SHD 16N581: État-Major Général, Section des Renseignements aux Armées, 'Réintégration des Réfugiés dans les Territoires Envhais,' Au G.Q.G. le 26 Juin 1916. 'B. Triage des suspects et des indésirables.'

⁵⁸ Nivet, *France*, pp.395-8.

⁵⁹ ADN 9R1193 and ADN 9R1229.

accusations were true, and even among these six there are calls for further investigation.⁶⁰ The majority of the other investigations contain no official verdict and are thus inconclusive.

Frustratingly, guilty verdicts rarely state what (if any) punishments the accused faced. In Neuville-en-Ferrain, the investigating gendarme concluded that 'le garde-champêtre Walcke aurait eu une attitude servile à l'égard des allemands [sic] [...] Il était dans les meilleurs termes avec la Kommandantur et les gendarmes allemands.'⁶¹ Yet further investigations were carried out, the conclusions of which are not preserved, and no mention of punishment is made. In the commune of Catillon, *Messieurs* Dambrine and Pamart (the adjunct and the secretary to the mayor respectively) were arrested after being found guilty of various forms of *intelligence avec l'ennemi*, but no further information is given.⁶² Judging by Martinage's study into judicial punishment of 'collaborators,' it was likely that many such suspects were not punished at all, which begs the question, what was the goal of the investigations? Were they simply satisfying the demands of the local populations, or were they genuine investigations – representing real suspicions on the part of the French authorities – which perhaps arrived at conclusions different from the expected ones, or which discovered behaviour which was questionable but not punishable under French law?

Arguably some of the most interesting conclusions of these investigations are those stating that the accusations made against the subject of an inquiry were clearly false, or that not enough information was discovered to justify further inquiry (which happened on four occasions).⁶³ The inquiry which took place in Wasnes-au-Bac as a result of a denunciation of the mayor, for example, discovered that the author was the daughter of

⁶⁰ The six are: ADN 9R1193: Crèvecœur-sur-Escault, Denain, Fourmies, Gognies, Neuville-en-Ferrain, and ADN 9R1229: Catillon.

⁶¹ ADN 9R1193: Neuville-en-Ferrain, Commissaire Spécial de Lille to Prefect, 21st June 1919.

⁶² ADN 9R1229: Catillon, Commissaire Divisionnaire, Chef de la 2^{ème} Brigade de police to Procureur de la République, 28th April 1919.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Hasmon, Mons-en-Pévèle, Montigny, Wasnes-au-Bac.

the signatory of the letter, who wrote the accusation in her father's name. Further, the letter denounced the actions of the mayor *after* the liberation, saying he was hoarding food supplies. The investigation concluded that not only was the authorship false, but so too was the claim, and it was suggested that the young lady be invited to the *mairie* and told to 'ne plus imiter la signature de son père,' and 'cesser toute communication épistolaire avec l'Administration.'⁶⁴ This links back to the above discourse on denunciation.

The actions of which people were accused or suspected are interesting regardless of 'objective reality,' precisely because some people believe that they could have happened. In Catillon, as mentioned above, the secretary to the mayor and adjunct to the mayor were arrested, charged with intelligence with the enemy, increasing the price of CRB goods and keeping the profit, stealing CRB goods, forgery and use of false documents, swindling, and embezzlement.⁶⁵

Much of this may be deemed 'financial mauvaise conduite,' and is representative of numerous accusations of questionable occupation behaviour. The key figures in the mayoral administration of Râches were accused of engaging in similar conduct.⁶⁶ In Boussois, the mayor was said to have allowed CRB flour to be used to bake bread for the Germans, contravening international law.⁶⁷ Accusations of commercial/financial *mauvaise conduite* are the most prevalent among male suspects, and are nearly always laid against municipalities and mayors.⁶⁸ Outrage at such actions is understandable: stealing from the local *comités de ravitaillement* or the CRB, or raising food prices and those of various goods for profit, prevented the functioning of aid services and jeopardised the survival of the local population. More general 'fraud' – creating false

⁶⁴ ADN 9R1229: Wasnes-au-Bac, Sous-Préfet de Valenciennes to Prefect, 13th May 1919.

⁶⁵ ADN 9R1229: Catillon, Commissaire Divisionnaire to Procureur de la République, 28th April 1919.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Râches, Procès-verbal, Déburcaus and Hatte, 17th February 1919.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Boussois, Brigadier de Gendarmerie to Jeumont (neighbouring commune), 8th January 1919.

⁶⁸ See ADHS 4M513 (40 women, 118 men); US NA Record Group 120, Entry 198 (12 women, 30 men), *passim*.

money and purposefully selling poor-quality or home-made goods, among other things (see the following chapter) – had a similar effect, as did withholding *allocations*, although the veracity of this is even more questionable. Selling or furnishing goods to the Germans obviously encroaches into illegal, *intelligence/commerce avec l'ennemi* territory, which would explain why detailed investigations were carried out into allegations of this type of behaviour.

Other types of *mauvaise conduite* were purported to have taken place. One mobilised Frenchman, for some reason in the occupied territory and not arrested, is said to have worked as a secret policeman for the Germans, by spying on and reporting conversations he heard on Croix's tramway – and he was also responsible for numerous house searches.⁶⁹ Perhaps he did so in order to avoid punishment for being a *mobilisable* behind enemy lines. *Garde-champêtre* Leclercq, of Bachy, apparently distributed the *Gazette des Ardennes* of his own free will, which was seen as an ideological, anti-patriotic crime by the inhabitants.⁷⁰ Similarly, there were cases where the mayors and municipal councillors were accused of forcing the inhabitants to work for the Germans, threatening them with punishments if they did not, such as the mayor of Saint-Rémy-Chaussée, who is reported to have said: 'Si tu ne marches pas de bonne volonté au travail pour les allemands, [sic] tu marcheras par force.'⁷¹ In Lille, according to I(b) lists, at least two Frenchmen worked for the German secret service,⁷² and in Roubaix two Belgian or French civilians appear to have aided the Germans in their 'enlèvement.'⁷³

The I(b) suspect lists also shed light on 'male' and 'ideological *mauvaise conduite*.' Of the 95 men listed, 39 are reported as having engaged in traffic or trade with the enemy – in gold, flour, or other goods. Among these was the mayor of Tainsiers, also noted as

⁶⁹ ADN 9R1196: Croix, Dupuis, n°291, 9th November 1918.

⁷⁰ ADN 9R1193: Bachy, Commissaire Spécial de Lille to Prefect, 11th August 1919.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Saint-Rémy-Chaussée, Vernet and Sallé, procès-verbal, 10th March 1919. Testimony of Georges Wanty.

⁷² US NA Record Group 120, Entry 198: I(b) 259 (1918); I(b) 273 (23rd June 1918).

⁷³ Becker, *Journaux*, Hirsch diary, 21st September 1917, p.281.

having frequently received officers at his house and having been on friendly terms with the Germans.⁷⁴ These may be seen as inevitabilities of the occupation – in order to preserve what little influence they had left, mayors would have needed to have good relations with the Germans, in the model of Robert Vandenbussche's *modus vivendi*.⁷⁵ This may also be the reason behind the inclusion in the list of M. Defives of St-André-les-Lille, said to have been in constant touch with the *Kommandantur* as a municipal councillor and on friendly terms with the Germans;⁷⁶ or for M. Dumontier of Comines, who kept a cinema exclusively for German use, and whose daughter was the fiancée of a German soldier.⁷⁷ Perhaps the same could not be argued for M. Minon of Villers-sire-Nicole, a clerk at the *mairie* accused of traffic with the enemy.⁷⁸

Further ideologically-charged examples are visible: M. Dutrieux of Raismes was employed by the Germans as a foreman at the *Fabrique Franc-Belge* and acted as an informer,⁷⁹ whereas some men are listed as having written articles for the *Gazette des Ardennes* – such is the case for M. Toque at Fourmies who was actually interned at Holzminden when his entry was added to the list.⁸⁰

Mauvaise conduite was therefore perceived as existing in male and female forms, conflating personal immorality with patriotic perversion. The *occupés* were permanently suspicious of each other – as the Allied authorities were of the *occupés* themselves – seeing any sign of goodwill towards the Germans as a marker of deeper compromise and unpatriotic tendencies. Friendship and especially sexual intimacy with Germans was often reconfigured to mean working voluntarily, spying, denouncing – a whole range of actions believed to be just as reprehensible as the initial friendliness/intimacy. The

⁷⁴ US NA Record Group 120, Entry 198: I(b) 290 (12th July 1918).

⁷⁵ Vandenbussche, 'Le pouvoir municipal,' p.445.

⁷⁶ US NA Record Group 120, Entry 198: I(b) 283 (2nd July 1918).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, I(b) 349 (7th October 1918).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, I(b) 316 (5th August 1918).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, I(b) 273 (23rd June 1918).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, I(b) 327 (7th September 1918).

culture de l'occupé thus condemned any breaches of respectable, patriotic social relations; of wartime norms dictating that the enemy must be hated. Beyond post-war denunciations, or *rapatriés* during the war listing suspect individuals, how did the wider occupied population react to those who had broken the unwritten rules of occupation? In some cases, revenge was sought; in rarer cases, it was achieved.

IV – Retribution and Revenge: Popular Reprisals

Revenge during the Occupation

Acts of revenge or expressions of disgust concerning suspect individuals were not – as may be expected – limited to the liberation or post-war period. On this topic more references can be found in the literature on the occupation, perhaps because revenge carried out during the occupation itself may be viewed as a form of resistance. Many sources testify to verbal attacks against individuals, usually women believed to have been engaging in intimate relations with the Germans or those working voluntarily for the Germans, during the occupation.¹ Insults such as ‘Bocharte’ and ‘femme à Boches’ were used frequently, plus variations such as ‘Bochette’ or ‘Bochesse’² – and for all those engaging in *mauvaise conduite*, including men, ‘embochés.’³ Unsurprisingly, the Germans forbade such insults, and diarists mentioned cases of people punished for this.⁴ Redier, writing of women who were German mistresses, stated that, ‘On osait à peine regarder ces femmes en place, car on allait en prison pour leur avoir déplu.’⁵

Despite or perhaps because of this, some *occupés* explicitly expressed their desire for post-war revenge, retribution, or justice in memoirs.⁶ Others did so during the occupation itself.⁷ Jean-Claude Auriol notes the existence of a pamphlet stating:

Regardez sur vos corsages où leurs doigts se sont posé, [sic] il y a une tâche [sic] faite du sang des innocents de Lille, Laon, Montmédy et d’ailleurs. Nous avons noté que vous êtes des femmes à boches et vous allez le payer cher. Aucune femme ne doit être la “putaine” d’un boche. Honte à vous.⁸

¹ See, for example, Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.248.

² Nivet, *France*, p.339.

³ ADHS 4M513: report n°1167, 21st April 1917 (Lille); Nivet, *France*, p.339; AML 4H280: *L’Écho* (24th December 1918).

⁴ Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 2nd October 1915, p.187; Hirsch diary 16th July 1915, p.242.

⁵ Redier, *Allemands*, p.263.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.327.

⁷ Nivet, ‘Femmes,’ p.311-12.

⁸ Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.120.

Clandestine tracts circulated in Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing and Bruxelles throughout the war, three of which used similar, insulting language to criticise those engaging in *mauvaise conduite* (these publications are examined in more detail in the ‘Active Resistance’ chapter).⁹ The title of one such publication, *Les Vidanges*, gives an indication of the attitude its authors held towards *embochés*. The only copy yet discovered dates from January 1917, and comprises a list of suspect individuals, often described in a humorous and insulting way. The explanation of the list highlights a mindset critical to the wider *culture de l’occupé*:

Nous publions une 1^{ere} [sic] liste exacte et contrôlée sur les immondes femelles et les dégoûtantes personnages faisant commerce et le reste avec nos ennemis.

Pendant que le mari, père, frère, ou fils se trouve au front ou dort sous huit pieds de terre, ces ordures font la noce, et prostituée [sic] sous la botte allemande, son être sa famille, sa Patrie !

La Patrie et la famille ne doivent pas souffrir de cette éclaboussure. Les femmes que nous dénonçons à la vindicte des honnêtes gens se sont enrôlées [sic] à leur manière sous les drapeaux de l’envahisseur, elles ont choisi la place qui convenait à leur insanité; Certaines pensent profiter des automobiles de l[e]urs amis et gagner l’Etranger le jour de leur prochaine retraite, mais qu’importe, nous les retrouverons un jour, et leurs noms aura été jeté comme des ordures..... à la poubelle !..... CEIL DE LYNX.¹⁰

Once again, it is primarily women who are the object of this criticism. Even during the occupation, therefore, there were some attempts to punish, target, and ostracise those who had engaged in *mauvaise conduite*.

⁹ See ADN 3U281/77: 1^{er} C.A. Région, Conseil de Guerre, Plainte n°613, Inventaire des pièces de la procédure suivie contre la nommée Rouvaux née Henneguïn Marguerite Joséphine inculpée d’intelligence avec l’ennemi: *La Liberté* (15th November 1915); *Les Vidanges*: ‘Bulletin concernant le chapitre de la malpropreté à Bruxelles, Lille, Roub-Tourcoing’ (1st January 1917, No.1, edition B); *La Vérité*, n°1 (Lille, 15th December 1915).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *Les Vidanges* (1st January 1917).

From Fiction to Fact

Maxence van der Meersch attributes much importance to attacks on suspect individuals in his novel *Invasion '14* – Fanny, the wife of an absent Belgian soldier, is subject of physical abuse in a bread queue because she was pregnant by a German.¹¹ This may seem far-fetched, imbued with a heavy sense of poetic licence, but it appears to have some basis in actual events, although it is not clear whether the young van der Meersch, only 11 in October 1918, witnessed or knew about them.¹² Marc Blancpain, in his 1980 memoir of the occupation, also refers to similar incidents:

En revanche, celles qu'on appelait "les femmes à boches" [sic] étaient haïes et, démasquées, vivaient dans le danger; on brisait leurs vitres à coups de cailloux; montrées du doigt, elles étaient bousculées et frappées sournoisement dans la rue ou dans les longues files d'attente du ravitaillement; on chantait derrière elles ou sous leurs fenêtres des plaintes ordurières et menaçantes; malades, on les laissait crever chez elles en disant: "Elles n'ont que ce qu'elles méritent."

On profita parfois de l'obscurité des soirs d'hiver pour les pousser dans un canal ou dans les eaux glacées d'une rivière.¹³

Archival evidence suggests there is some truth behind van der Meersch and Blancpain's prose. In Denain, according to repatriated *occupés*, there were 'véritables batailles de femmes' in 1914 – those who worked freely for the Germans, nicknamed the 'femmes à sacs,' were hit, insulted, threatened with having their hair cut.¹⁴

The first example of popular vengeance in Lille occurred on 12th February 1915. As a police report indicates, a group of about one-hundred 'manifestants sont allés spontanément' to an *estaminet* run by a Belgian man suspected of having denounced hidden French soldiers. The crowd threw stones at the window, smashing the glass,

¹¹ Maxence van der Meersch, *Invasion '14* (London, 1937; originally Paris, 1935), (trans.) Gerard Hopkins, p.273-6.

¹² Le Naour, 'Femmes tondues,' p.151.

¹³ Blancpain, *Quand Guillaume*, p.246. The municipal police of Lille reported bodies of men and women found in the canal throughout the occupation, but the coroner always lists suicide as the cause of death. See AML 4H266-71.

¹⁴ ADHS 4M513: report n°705, 9th February 1917.

causing a few hundred francs' material damage. No-one was injured, and three hours later order was reestablished, with no arrests made.¹⁵

Similar events took place, again in Lille, on 4th March 1915, this time targeting a woman: a crowd of about 500 people 'huait' 39 year-old Mme Devildre, on boulevard Victor Hugo. A French policeman helped to accompany Devildre home, seemingly attempting to ameliorate the disorder which could engender German reprisals for the entire city. During the walk 'des pierres ont été lancées contre la femme Devilde par des enfants, et des femmes qui la suivaient en la traitant de "putain".' Devilde called two passing German soldiers, but their intervention exacerbated the anger of the crowd. Once at her sister's house, the sister called for more German soldiers, and about ten came to disperse the crowd – shots were fired, but no-one was injured. Devilde had also been molested by crowds on 2nd and 3rd March.¹⁶

An interesting case is related in a letter from one Kleeberg, working for the German military police at the *Kommandantur* of Lille, to M. Pollet, *Chef de la Police Civile de Lille*, on 19th April 1915:

Le 18/4/15 un rassemblement s'était formé vers 1 heure de l'après-midi [...] autour d'une femme française de condition moyenne. La malheureuse femme était maltraitée par plusieurs femmes pour des raisons qui ne me sont pas connues. On lui arrachait ses vêtements on lui donnait [sic] des coups [sic] de pied et on lui arrachait les cheveux. En même temps on entendait pousser des cris tels que "Elle tient avec les sales boches" etc.¹⁷

It is curious that such similar events took place so close to each other and so relatively early on in the war. However, there is an explanation: this was the beginning of what became known as the *affaire des sacs*.

¹⁵ ADN 9R581: Report of the Commissaire de Police du 5^e arrondissement of Lille contained within a report by the Commissaire Central de Lille to Prefect, 12th February 1915.

¹⁶ AML 4H273: Report from the Commissaire de police du 7^e arrondissement, 4th March 1915.

¹⁷ AML 4H274: Kleeberg, Commandanture de Lille, Police militaire, to Chef de la Police Civile de Lille, 19th April 1915.

The traditional narrative of this *affaire* is that a series of strikes occurred in textile factories from April to July 1915, primarily in Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing, and that these workers and their employers decided to stop producing sandbags for patriotic reasons.¹⁸ Although industrialists and local notables did play an important role (see the 'Respectable Resistance' chapter), the strikes actually started with crowds of outraged (seemingly working-class) people refusing to allow the workers to enter the factories, launching verbal and physical attacks including pulling hair and beatings.¹⁹ Many victims and perpetrators were women. These attacks, which in some sense have an element of *charivari* about them,²⁰ were a means of reinforcing the *culture de l'occupé*. In particular, they explicitly demonstrated what was acceptable or not according the moral-patriotic norms: in this case, making sandbags which would aid the German war effort was clearly unacceptable.

L'affaire Orlianges

Even association with those who were believed to be making sandbags could morally contaminate an individual. One case study demonstrates this, and the strength of perceptions of *mauvaise conduite*: on 24th June 1915 in Roubaix, inhabitants of the *cul de Four* of the 4th arrondissement were 'très surexités [sic]' against their local *Commissaire de Police*, M. Orlianges. They reproached him for frequenting the *cabaret Bonte*, a 'lieu mal réputé' whose owner (Mme Bonte) 'aurait installé un atelier où l'on fabriquerait des sacs pour l'armée allemande.' The preceding evening, about one-hundred people waited for Orlianges at the cabaret's exit and openly threw 'des ordures' at him. Orlianges called on a German gendarme who came to his aid, even firing a shot into the crowd before his revolver was knocked from his hand. The *Commissaire Central* did not know how these events ended, but noted that 'Cet incident fait l'objet de

¹⁸ Nivet, *France*, p.227-9; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.176.

¹⁹ See ADN 9R716, 726, 735, 753; AMT H4A32; AML 4H121.

²⁰ For a description of *charivari*, see Eugene Vance, 'Le Jeu de la feuillée and the Poetics of Charivari,' MLN, 100:4, French Issue (September 1985), p.85; Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France,' *Past & Present*, 50 (February 1971), pp.41-75.

toutes les conversations ce matin.’²¹ Did Bonte really work for, and allow (or even force) other women to work for the Germans? It is hard to say for certain, but another statement backs up this accusation: ‘Depuis un mois et demi, j’ai quitté la maison que j’habitais rue de l’Epeule 29, parce que les allemands [sic] avaient pris possession de mes ateliers pour faire travailler à leur compte, sous la direction d’une femme Bonte, pour les ouvrières.... [sic]’²²

The attack on Orlanges actually came after disorders the previous day, the full details of which are unclear.²³ Mlle Bert and her aunt had been attacked by a crowd of between one-hundred and a thousand people,²⁴ who hit them, knocked them to the floor, and pulled them by their hair. They did so because they believed the women worked for the Germans. One woman, who admitted her involvement in the disturbance and violence, noted that the *quartier* had experienced frequent scenes of disorder ‘à cause des femmes qui travaillent pour les allemands [sic].’²⁵ After the attack, Bert went to see Orlanges at the *Commissariat*. According to public rumour, Bert was his mistress, and he was protecting her.²⁶ When Bert left the *Commissariat*, she went to visit one of the women who attacked her, but with whom she had argued, to excuse herself for what had happened. Her father also came, ‘et lui a adressé des reproches véhéments relativement au fait pour lequel elle avait été assaillie; elle lui jura n’avoir pas fait de sacs, mais elle ne put convaincre personne parmi les gens.’ Respectability is visible here: Bert, after being attacked, wanted to set the record straight, but even her father felt disgraced by the accusations against her.

²¹ ADN 9R726: report of Benet, 24th June 1915, cited in Commissaire Central to mayor of Roubaix, 5th July 1915 (‘Au sujet de la conduite de M. ORLIANGES’), p.8.

²² *Ibid.*, testimony of M. Georges Puravelle, cited in a report from Commissaire de police Barthouil, 28th July 1915, cited in a report from Wagnier to Prefect, 15th August 1915, p.18. Original emphasis.

²³ See conflicting testimony in *ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, testimony of Céline Lernoux (26th June 1915) in report of Benet, 5th July 1915, p.12-13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, testimony of Mme Dubus (25th June 1915), p.9-10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

When Orlianges came ‘pour la reconduire,’ insults were hurled at him, Bert and her father, by a crowd a few-hundred strong. The shop owner claims to have returned home in order to avoid the scene, but later heard that horse manure had been thrown at Orlianges.²⁷ Orlianges’s apparent relations with a woman believed to work for the Germans, and another woman apparently running a sandbag operation, turned him into a target for popular reprisals. He had breached the *culture de l’occupé* and was punished accordingly.

The documents do provide the perspective of 24 year-old dressmaker Fernande Bert, who noted that

en sortant de chez ma tante [...] j’ai été assaillie par un certain nombre de femmes qui m’attendaient pour me frapper parce que l’on m’accuse de faire des sacs pour les Allemands. [Les femmes] se sont approchées de moi pour me battre. Mme Dubus, en me voyant, m’a dit: “Ah, c’est vous, on vous reconnaîtra [sic] après la guerre”. Puis elle m’arracha mon chapeau [sic] et me porta plusieurs coups de poing sur la tête et le corps. Plusieurs autres femmes suivirent cet exemple.²⁸

Bert claimed she did not work for the Germans, and chose to go to Orliange’s office herself to press charges against her assailants. Once here, the assailants were persuaded by Orliange that they had been mistaken in assuming Bert worked for the Germans, and were charged with persuading the rest of the crowd of this. But the crowd refused to listen, and it was at this point that horse manure and insults were thrown at Bert, her father, and Orlianges, with the majority being aimed at Orlianges.²⁹ Orlianges’s reputation was poor, both among the population and the police, and his breach of occupation acceptability exacerbated his situation.³⁰

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, testimony of Fernande Bert (28th June 1915), p.15-16. Sometimes also referred to as Fernande ‘Berte’ or ‘Berthe.’

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

For whatever reason – in response to such threats or a genuine *crise de conscience* – many in Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing refused to continue working until roughly late-July 1915, when harsh German measures quelled the public disorder and punished absentees.³¹ This appears to offer an explanation for the lack of similar disorders and acts of public retribution until the liberation. However, this did not, according to reports from *rapatriés*, stop certain women voluntarily making sandbags for the Germans elsewhere, for instance at Anzin and Valenciennes.³²

Postwar Popular Purges?

From October 1918, few ‘purges’ like those seen in the aftermath of the Second World War took place.³³ This was perhaps linked to the rapid Allied re-occupation, which imposed its own strict controls, dissuading mass disorder; perhaps also because of aforementioned military investigations into and removal of suspect individuals. Yet some acts of popular retribution did occur. On the evening of 19th October 1918, ‘une bande de jeunes gens accompagnés de femmes a parcouru diverses rues du quartier St-Maurice [in Lille] en manifestant devant les maisons où des femmes avaient entretenu des relations intimes avec les soldats allemands.’ Five women had their houses targeted, and vandalism and theft was carried out: windows were smashed, money and property (which the crowd claimed the women had obtained as favours from the Germans) was stolen.³⁴ That same evening, a crowd of 200 men and women (possibly the same people) vandalised and stole from a *pâtisserie* and an *estaminet* whose owners were ‘connues pour avoir exercé le commerce avec les allemands [sic] pendant l’occupation.’³⁵ A police report from the next day (20-21st October 1918) explained that similar scenes occurred in the 8th arrondissement: at the house of a woman who had lodged a German, all the window panes were smashed with stones, and the crowd broke into the house to steal certain

³¹ See AMT H4A32 passim; ADN 9R745: German poster, Tourcoing, 12th July 1915.

³² ADHS 4M513: report n°746, 15th February 1917; n°769, 19th February 1917; n°780, 20th February 1917; n°951, 10th March 1917.

³³ See, for example, Fabrice Virgili, *La France “virile”: Des femmes tondues à la libération* (Paris, 2000).

³⁴ ADN 9R1240: Commissaire special de Lille to Prefect, 20th October 1918.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, report from the Commissariat de la Police du 19 au 20 Octobre 1918.

objects. Window panes were smashed at another woman's home, and 'une maison connue pour avoir fait fait du commerce et entretenue des relations avec les allemands [sic], a été mis au pillage par une foule d'inconnus.' The female owner had been warned in advance and kept her distance.³⁶

A police report concerned the sacking of a house believed to belong to a married woman said to have had a German lover during the occupation, and to have engaged in commerce with the enemy. The owner of this house was actually her aunt, and the suspect – one Mme Terasse – had already fled the commune.³⁷ For Le Naour, such police reports 'sont d'un étonnant silence et cachent des réalités certainement très violentes derrière des phrases laconiques et pudiques,' such as 'La population s'acharna contre elle [...]'³⁸ Thus there were some unofficial, fairly violent 'purges' – and there were probably further unreported examples of this, or reported examples for which the documents are missing – yet here the crowds appear to have wanted to remove the wealth accumulated during the occupation by certain suspects, and to damage their buildings, rather than any more permanent or serious punishment of the suspects. This may make their expression of anger representative of a desire to punish outside the realms of the law, which they saw as inadequate, and a recognition that the suspects had not broken any laws but had still behaved badly, that they had still in some way 'betrayed' their *patrie*. *Mauvaise conduite* was not confined to legal definitions.

A few sources also mention female head-shaving taking place, one of the most infamous symbols of popular punishment of alleged collaborators during the Liberation of the Second World War.³⁹ As Le Naour notes, attempting to study and shed light on similar

³⁶ AML 4H271: Commissariat Central de Lille, 'crimes, délits, évènements,' report of 20-21st October 1918.

³⁷ ADN 9R1196: Croix, Cousinet, 17th November 1918; report from the British Army, 14th November 1918.

³⁸ Le Naour, 'Femmes tondues,' p.153.

³⁹ See, for example, Virgili, *La France*; idem, 'Les "tondues" à la Libération: le corps des femmes, enjeu d'une réappropriation [sic],' *CLIO. Histoire, femmes et sociétés*, 1 (1995), accessed online on 1st June 2009 at <http://clio.revues.org/index518.html>; Jackson, *Dark Years*, pp.580-84. Also, Elizabeth Brunazzi

events during and after the liberation of the First World War leads to ‘un mur de silence bien plus insurmontable que celui du secret honteux de 1944: en effet, si les sources et les archives abondent en ce qui concerne la seconde libération, on ne recense guère de manifestation des odieuses tontes à l’issue de la Première Guerre mondiale.’⁴⁰ But there is some hard evidence of head-shavings. In his inter-war book *Occupied 1918-1930: A Postscript to the Western Front*, British journalist Ferdinand Tuohy noted of reoccupied northern France: ‘Not a few of the black-listed ones – women – were found to have been shorn by fellow-citizens as a stigma of shame,’ although he also hints at more serious methods of retribution, for ‘others were come upon with their throats cut.’⁴¹ Further, Le Naour cites the testimony of peasant soldier Grenadou, referring to the liberation of 1918: ‘Quand on arrivait dans ces pays-là, ils réglèrent leur comptes, de vieilles querelles du temps des Allemands. Ils coupaient les cheveux aux bonnes femmes. Tu parles d’un cirque! On trouvait pas [sic] ça à notre goût.’⁴² A photographer from Valenciennes testified to head-shavings in November 1918.⁴³ Thus, although not as widespread as in Belgium in 1918,⁴⁴ nor as in Second-World-War France, some popular, physical reprisals did occur in northern France and the Nord in particular. Curiously, this phenomenon, even if it was limited in nature due to the absence of the latent civil war which explained the explosion of popular justice in 1944-5,⁴⁵ is rarely mentioned in accounts of the occupation and liberation.

notes ‘the perennial commonplace of parades of women with shaven heads during the purges that followed the Liberation in both literature and cinema.’ Elizabeth Brunazzi, ‘The Question of Colette and Collaboration,’ *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 13: 2 (Autumn 1994), p.282.

⁴⁰ Le Naour, ‘Femmes tondues,’ p.148-9.

⁴¹ Ferdinand Tuohy, *Occupied 1918-1930: A Postscript to the Western Front* (London, 1931), p.18. The phrase ‘black-listed ones’ refers to Allied intelligence lists of suspect individuals.

⁴² Grenadou, *paysan français* (Paris, 1978), p.131, cited in Le Naour, ‘Femmes tondues,’ p.149.

⁴³ Nivet, *France*, p.343.

⁴⁴ For the Belgian experience, see Laurence van Ypersele, ‘Sortir de la guerre, sortir de l’occupation: les violences populaires en Belgique au lendemain de la première guerre mondiale,’ *Vingtième siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 83 (July-September 2004), pp.65-74. Here, even Allied soldiers joined in with acts of popular revenge, such as destruction of property and female head-shaving (p.67). See also, van Ypersele and Rousseaux, ‘Leaving the War’; Laurence van Ypersele, “‘Au nom de la Patrie, à mort les traîtres!’”. La répression des inciviques belges de 1914 à 1918,’ *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, 3 (novembre-décembre 2007), accessed online on 22nd June 2009 at www.histoire-politique.fr.

⁴⁵ Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.580.

An Incomplete Jigsaw

As Fitzpatrick notes, Diderot's encyclopaedia states that 'One is inclined to think that the delator is a corrupt man, the accuser an angry man, and the denouncer an indignant man.'⁴⁶ This does not mean that all denunciations, or indeed accusatory witness testimonies and mentions of *mauvaise conduite*, are inherently false. It is here contended that there must be truth behind at least some of the denunciations, accusations, and witness testimonies studied; perhaps a greater truth than has previously been admitted by French historians. But whatever the 'historical truth' regarding the behaviours and actions of individuals, there was an undeniable fixation with *mauvaise conduite* among both the Allied authorities and many *occupés* themselves. For the latter, perceived breaches of the acceptable, respectable norms of wartime society comprised a betrayal which at best undermined the wider claims of dignified suffering, and at worst threatened national survival. Both during and after the war, retribution and justice was demanded concerning those ostensibly engaging in such unrespectable actions. The complexities of occupied life were to a large extent brushed aside in the Manichean *culture de l'occupé*, with one form of misconduct leading to accusations of further forms. Personal morality and patriotism were conflated, as were legal and illegal actions, to form an idea of wider *mauvaise conduite*. These allegedly unpatriotic behaviours, however, were just one set of responses to the occupation, arguably based on survival instincts. Despite the seemingly simplistic nature of the *culture de l'occupé* concerning *mauvaise conduite*, occasionally a moral-patriotic grey zone was acknowledged. This could be the case regarding the behaviours and actions discussed here, but it was most noticeable in the reality and discourse surrounding another response to occupation: engaging in acts of criminality.

⁴⁶ Fitzpatrick, 'Signals,' p.832.

V – Moral Borderlands: Criminality during the Occupation

Examining *mauvaise conduite* has already required a blurring of the lines between the illegal and legal definitions of behaviours and actions in occupied France. This chapter leans towards the legal, comprising a study of general criminality during the period, another neglected area in works on the occupation. Committing a crime during the occupation represents another form of misconduct – albeit one that took place *between* collaboration and resistance.¹ Such actions provided the keys to survival for certain *occupés*, yet they clearly infringed upon the important notion of respectability. It is thus pertinent to use the term ‘mauvaise conduite criminelle’ to reflect this distinction, even if it is rather forced, as none of the categories studied in this thesis are hermetically sealed off from one another. The fluidity of power structures regarding policing, and the notion of a moral economy are central to understanding the possible forms of action and behaviour in occupied France, of which *mauvaise conduite* and ‘resistance’ were just two examples bookending a broader spectrum of activity. *Mauvaise conduite criminelle* was located in this grey area. Just as the trenches shifted the physical front, so the occupation altered the internalised socio-cultural-moral front among the local population.

This chapter explains the situation of the French police force, possibly explaining high levels of crime. This is followed by an examination of crime proper – outlining the most common occupation crimes: theft (which could be to the detriment of Germans or French), fraud, speculation and profiteering, and smuggling. I will end by highlighting how the role of young people in crime was a great concern for contemporaries. These themes demonstrate further the *culture de l’occupé* and the responses to occupation.

¹ Taylor, *Between*.

Moral Economy

Recently, historians of the First World War have noted the ‘need to look more closely at the way that societies negotiated a new wartime moral economy, adapting prewar moral, legal and religious norms to create acceptable wartime values which had their own internal logic.’² The values of *mauvaise conduite* form part of this, but the altered moral economy is most visible when studying criminality during the occupation.

The term ‘moral economy’ requires some explanation. It was most associated with E.P. Thompson, describing the ‘traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties of the community.’³ Thompson perceived the moral economy ‘as a popular consensus about what distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate practices, a consensus rooted in the past and capable of inspiring action.’⁴ The prevailing concept of the moral economy in the social sciences has emphasised conflict and resistance, particularly regarding Third World insurrections – such as James C. Scott’s study of peasant rebellions in early twentieth-century Burma and Vietnam.⁵

In occupied France, it appears that the moral economy shifted amongst a certain part of the population, making previously illegitimate actions (such as theft and fraud) seem more acceptable. It was legitimate for an individual to have access to the basic social goods needed for survival,⁶ whatever form that access may take. This view is mirrored in *Invasion ’14*, in which van der Meersch writes of the revolution in moral values which took place, with one woman who had never committed a crime being forced to steal by

² Heather Jones, Jennifer O’Brien, and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian, ‘Introduction: Untold War,’ in *Untold War*, p.15.

³ E. P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,’ *Past & Present*, 50 (1971), pp.76.

⁴ Thomas Clay Arnold, ‘Rethinking Moral Economy,’ *The American Political Science Review*, 95:1 (March 2001), pp.86.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.86; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985); idem, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).

⁶ For more on the notion of social goods, see Arnold, ‘Rethinking,’ p.90.

circumstances.⁷ For some, survival replaced conventional morals, yet on the collective level such actions were still illegitimate, subverting respectability. This was partly because of pre-war socio-cultural understanding of social goods and the means of access to these, enforced by the French administration and law. For functionaries in the police or municipal government, the moral economy remained encoded in juridical documents; engaging in criminal acts undermined the collective good, removing social goods from their legitimate owners and thus fracturing the social relations underpinning the moral economy itself. *Mauvaise conduite criminelle* threatened the stability and survival of local areas, not just during the occupation but also after the liberation.

Methodological Challenges

Documents related to crime pose well-known problems. Police reports and statistics evidently only demonstrate *reported* crimes, therefore only offering a glimpse into the reality of criminality – albeit a useful and often suggestive one. Thus the reality of criminality is as occluded as that of *mauvaise conduite*. Further, in the case of foreign occupation, the question of what constituted crime, and *whose* laws were being broken, is raised. The Germans criminalised many forms of previously legal activities,⁸ and in some cases actions viewed by them as illegal could be said to represent resistance, such as refusing to work for the Germans. This was particularly the case because, just as Sophie de Schaepdrijver states for Belgium, ‘L’autorité allemande était ressentie comme foncièrement illégitime.’⁹ Breaking the laws and rules of an illegitimate power was therefore a perfectly legitimate course of action for the occupied population. Whether this constituted ‘real’ criminality is thus questionable, but here this issue is here engaged with only occasionally, as resistance is examined in Part II of the thesis.

⁷ Van der Meersch, *Invasion*, p.115.

⁸ Such as opening or closing house doors outside of specifically allotted times – see ADN 9R745, German poster, Tourcoing, 30th June 1915.

⁹ Sophie de Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre mondiale* (Brussels, 2004), p.120.

Many relevant documents are of German provenance, obfuscating their usefulness as indicators of criminal activity regarded as such by the occupied population. Whilst some limited French sources do exist, the way in which the French police was sidelined during the occupation means that these represent only a fraction of what was occurring. A final problem is born out of the interpretation of documents on criminality, particularly crime statistics. It is difficult to know whether the type and extent of criminality was *directly* caused by the occupation, or whether a particular subset of the population would be engaged in similarly criminal activities during peacetime. It is worth attempting to engage with these issues, but important to outline the challenges faced at the outset.

This chapter examines criminality on a local scale, focusing predominantly on Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing, for which sources are fairly comprehensive. Concentrating on the largest towns of the department is not necessarily representative geographically-speaking, but can be justified by their large populations. I aim to assess the possibilities and peculiarities of occupied life, to demonstrate the multitude of actions and decisions open to those among the population willing to infringe upon social and legal conventions. By doing so, I will shed light on further ‘dark spots’ in the history of the occupation.

To study criminality, it is necessary to touch upon the phenomenon of policing, although the archival documentation related to this is lacking, meaning the reflections on this subject will be unavoidably fleeting and incomplete.

Policing

In November 1918, the *Commissaire de Police* of Vieux-Condé, Fresnes, Escautpont and Crespin summarised his force’s occupation experience:

Les mauvais instincts se font jour, quelques civils participent au pillage avec les soldats ou cambriolent des maisons; le travail a cessé, il faut s’organiser [...] La police est débordée par des besognes de toute nature. Néanmoins, elle assure le maintien de l’ordre, constate les crimes et délits et en livre les auteurs aux tribunaux civils, ce qui n’est pas facile car la circulation est

entravée, parfois impossible. La surveillance des fraudeurs en denrées est faite.¹⁰

Thus the French police force was permitted, and able, to operate during the occupation, but there is a suggestion that it could not cope with the scale of criminality. Perhaps this was because it had too few men, and/or because the occupation provided a particular breeding ground for crime. The *Commissaire* explained that the German civil police force was set apart from its French counterpart by its main aim of searching for those who harboured Allied soldiers and helped them to escape. It was also involved in the creation of espionage networks by paying *ravitailleurs* for denunciations. Such ‘gens tarés’ were occasionally even employed as fully-paid German policemen.¹¹ Here, a dichotomy between the French and German police forces can be seen, a split of power whereby the French police worked for, and the German police against, the population – the Germans using undesirable individuals for this. This is a precursor in some ways to the ‘rival police forces’ of Second-World-War France,¹² albeit with fewer complexities. The latter part of the report highlights that the Germans were suspicious of the French police, occasionally arresting French policemen.¹³

Power struggles between the two forces were a regular occurrence and, unsurprisingly given the Germans’ heavy-handed governance and strong military presence, this was more of a problem for the French police than for the Germans. The former frequently attempted to carry out German demands, at least regarding the maintenance of order, a policy with which it agreed and which may be seen as practically the only real common ground between the French and German authorities.¹⁴ Yet this was no guarantee of German non-interference or non-punishment. On 25th August 1916, the *Commissaire*

¹⁰ ADN 9R512: Report of the Commissaire de police de Condé, Vieux-Condé, Fresnes, Escautpont and Crespin; ‘Situation pendant la guerre de 1914-1918,’ to Sous-Préfet à Valenciennes, 28th November 1918.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation* (London, 2006), pp.128-132.

¹³ ADN 9R512: Report of the Commissaire de police de Condé.

¹⁴ Including helping the Germans to transfer prisoners: ADN 9R353, *passim*.

Central of Lille posted a policeman next to the Palais Rameau, who could intervene if gatherings banned by the Germans occurred. However, that evening the Germans arrested the policeman in question, stating that only the German military police was involved with maintaining order in this respect. The following day, the *Commissaire* asked the mayor to intervene on the policeman's behalf,¹⁵ only to discover that that he had been released earlier that day.¹⁶

Exemplary of these clashes and pre-existing tensions was an incident of 6th April 1916: *Commissaire de Police* Boinet of the 8th arrondissement of Lille was walking outside at 8.25pm when two German soldiers shouted at him. A heated conversation took place. The Germans informed him that he was breaking curfew without a valid pass. Boinet stated that he did not need one: policemen were permitted to circulate without permission, and he was their boss. Finally, one soldier confiscated his ID card and told him to report to the local police office the next morning. Boinet annoyed the soldier by stating, "Si vous voulez [...] Mais oui, si vous voulez. Je ne vous dis rien de malhonnête, vous n'avez donc pas à vous froisser."¹⁷ The language and tone used by Boinet demonstrate his frustration, and the importance of respectability is evident, with Boinet maintaining a respectful (if occasionally sarcastic) tone towards the Germans, but himself being treated with disrespect (see Fig. 5).

The next morning, before Boinet was due at the relevant police station, the same German soldier called at his house, eventually kicking his door off the hinges. Boinet complained about this to the *Commissaire Central*, asking that his letter be forwarded to the German authorities in order to punish the soldier.¹⁸ The Germans responded that Boinet was in

¹⁵ AML 4H274: Commissaire Central de Police of Lille to mayor, 26th August 1916, n°3227.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26th August 1916, n°3243.

¹⁷ ADN 9R580: Ville de Lille – Commissariat de Police du 8^e arrondissement, Commissaire de Police Boinet to Commissaire Central, 7th April 1916.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the wrong, and that his report was in fact ‘inconvenant’ in its tone and content.¹⁹ The precariousness and instability of the French police’s situation is evident, as is the importance Boinet placed on respectable social relations.

Yet the power struggle did not exclusively involve the French and German police forces. Aware of the discordance and the changing power structures, certain members of the wider population often used the situation to their advantage, in a further example of *mauvaise conduite* and of social inversion. This occurred as early as November 1914, when Mme Lefebvre complained to the Germans about the condemnation of her 18 year-old sister, sentenced by the *tribunal correctionnel de Lille* to two years’ imprisonment for theft. Lefebvre asserted that this was an act of vengeance on the part of the French police, because her sister had had intimate relations with German soldiers and her (Lefebvre’s) husband worked ‘aux automobiles’ for the German military authority. Lefebvre claimed that she was ‘molestée par la police française, qui perquisitionne chez elle et chez sa sœur et lui a fait retirer les secours qu’elle avait.’ Her complaint was passed on to the head of the German military police and then to the *Kommandant*. The latter asked that the policemen in question be punished, but the mayor of Lille stated that before taking any decisions, he wanted an inquiry establishing the truth of the complaint, which seemed to be a way for ‘une femme de mauvaise vie d’appitoyer [sic] l’autorité allemande sur son sort en travestissant impudemment des actes de vol pour lesquels sa sœur a été condamnée par la justice.’²⁰ This hints at the idea of an abuse of occupation power structures, with those at the bottom of the social hierarchy – the unrespectable ‘femmes de mauvaise vie’ – playing off the Germans against the French police.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Loben (S. Lieut and police officer) to Commissaire Central, 17th April 1916.

²⁰ ADN 9R556: Extrait des Procès-verbaux de la Commandature de Lille, Séance du 21 Novembre 1914 [sic], ‘VIII – Plainte Lefebvre.’

This was a commonplace occurrence. In July 1915, the *Commissaire Central* of Lille wrote to the mayor, noting that:

Depuis un certain temps, les agents de police, chaque fois qu'ils interviennent, soit pour conduire des ivrognes au violon, soit pour toutes autres causes, sont généralement menacés d'une dénonciation à l'Autorité militaire allemande [...] Etant donné que chaque fois que; les [sic] agents procèdent à l'égard d'un délinquant c'est un ennemi en plus qu'ils se créent, il arrivera un moment où le désir de s'éviter tout ennui incitera les agents à négliger leur devoir et ils fermeront les yeux plutôt que d'intervenir, de sorte que notre police, fortement réduite en nombre, complètement désarmée et constamment menacée d'arrestation, ne constituera plus qu'une force plus apparente que réelle [sic] et incapable de maintenir l'ordre plusque [sic] jamais nécessaire.²¹

The *Commissaire* gave an example of this worrying state of affairs in action. On 11th July 1915, three French policemen from the sixth arrondissement arrested ex-convict Constant Hugo for drunkenness and physical violence towards his wife. During the journey from Hugo's house to the police station, Hugo 'ne cessa de dire à l'agent Mullier, qui le conduisait, qu'il le dénoncerait à la Commandanture.' This is exactly what happened: Hugo denounced not only Mullier, but all the policemen present at the station. He claimed that he was physically assaulted and insulted on the pretext that he worked for the German authority. The *Commissaire* stated that this was false, because he had personally instructed all police personnel to abstain from all acts of violence, and 'de ne faire ni actes ni réflexions pouvant être interprétés [sic] comme hostiles à l'Autorité allemande. Rien jusqu'ici n'a démontré que ces instructions n'étaient pas scrupuleusement suivies.' Yet Hugo's complaint did indeed lead to the arrest, by the Germans, of those agents who could have mistreated him – although an internal police investigation demonstrated that they had not done so. Hugo was bruised, but this was in fact a result of his wife having thrown household objects at him in order to defend herself, a fact she freely admitted. The *Commissaire Central* therefore ended his letter by asking the mayor to persuade the Germans to release the arrested policemen.²²

²¹ AML 4H274: Commissaire Central de Police of Lille to mayor, 21st July 1915.

²² *Ibid.*

A case where the conclusion is visible is that of M. Willerval, a policeman from Tourcoing. He was brought before a *Conseil de guerre* on 13th March 1916, accused of aiding, feeding and clothing hidden French soldiers from September to October 1915. Strikingly, the accusers were in fact the soldiers themselves. The defence, led by M. Spéder, the interpreter at the *mairie*, rubbished such claims. Spéder argued that the ‘soldiers’ were in fact vagabonds who had been convicted during and before the occupation. Labelling them as ‘deserters’ from the French army, Spéder explained how their previous criminal record exempted them from being in the army. He purported that their motivation for denouncing Willerval was survival: they presented themselves to the Germans as French soldiers and denounced Willerval to reduce their sentences, in the hope that they would still be in a German prison at the end of hostilities, to avoid the French justice system. The *Conseil* was swayed by Spéder’s case, and Willerval was acquitted.²³

Spéder defended more French policemen from accusations on the part of the occupied population. In July 1915, two *Tourquennois* policemen (Scrittes and Rousseau) were accused by two women of having insulted the Germans whilst accompanying soldiers in finding lodgings. Spéder’s defence noted that a certain part of the population ‘comprend mal son obligation de loger’ and subsequently complained about the French police’s role. This was especially the case in houses and cabarets which in peacetime were ‘déjà en guerre avec la police ou sa surveillance’ and which ‘se trouvent très vite prêts à user par vengeance de répressaille [sic] envers elles. Ceci doit certainement être la raison du cas qui nous occupe.’²⁴ Again, a reversal of the social hierarchy is evident here: those normally ‘en guerre’ with the police could assert their dominance during the occupation. It is not clear what happened to Scrittes, but Rousseau was sentenced to 6 months’ imprisonment in Germany for his alleged insults towards the Germans.²⁵ The influence

²³ ADN 9R753: Séance du Conseil de Guerre du 13 mars 1916.

²⁴ AMT H4A29: Rapport Concernant les Agents Scrittes et Rousseau, n.d. Spéder seems to be the author.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, note from von Tessin, Kommandantur of Tourcoing, n°603, 10th July 1915; ADN 9R745: German poster, ‘Condamnation,’ 12th July 1915.

such denunciations could have is therefore evident. Other denunciations of the French police took place in Tourcoing in August 1916.²⁶

Misuse of power structures took forms beyond denunciations. During the night of 17-18th February 1918, the owner of an *estaminet* in Lille discovered an intruder behind the bar. A small fight ensued, after which the thief, later identified as Julien Devolder, managed to escape with various goods. According to the owner, 'Pour opérer, Devolder était vêtu d'une capote et coiffé d'un calot de soldat allemande. [sic]' After Devolder had run away, the owner found documents in German on the floor, containing the inscription '2 Batt. Res. Feldart, Rgt. 44. 17.11.18, libellé au nom d'un nommé Kar. Hofsommer.'²⁷ Perhaps Devolder had stolen the clothes and papers from a German soldier. Whatever the case, the Germans arrested Devolder and still had him in custody at the time of the writing of the police report.²⁸

Yet this bizarre incident was not as isolated as might first be imagined: a month earlier, three Frenchmen and a French woman had been arrested for 'escroquerie et complicité d'escroquerie de marchandise.' One of the men had 'usurpé la qualité de la police militaire allemande pour saisir une certaine quantité de savons.'²⁹ This and the above examples represent just some cases of *mauvaise conduite criminelle* that blur the boundaries between infractions of a legal nature, and those of a socio-patriotic nature.

There are other examples hinting at the wider population's acknowledgement that the Germans were the dominant force.³⁰ This shift in power played a role in increased criminality, because the French police was restricted in its actions, and because *occupés* perceived (with some justification) the French police as lacking authority in any

²⁶ ADN 9R752: Commissaire Central to Prefect, 16th August 1916, a. and b.

²⁷ AML 4H270: Ville de Lille, Commissariat Central de Police, report, 'crimes, délits, événements,' 18-19th February 1918.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-15th January 1918.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5th July and 16-17th August 1918.

meaningful sense. Further, the nature of German occupation created previously nonexistent avenues of action, offered new choices, and ‘forced’ some to pursue criminal actions out of sheer necessity.

What, then, was the legal and practical reality of the dual authority concerning the French police force and justice system? For local French authorities, this was unclear: indeed, in October 1916 the *Procureur de la République* of Lille wrote to Governor von Graevenitz stating his understanding of legal procedure for criminal cases, and asking for verification of this. He spoke of the ‘difficultés [...] qui peuvent entraîner [sic] certaines divergences de vues entre des juridictions fonctionnant parallèlement depuis bientôt deux ans, et produire même, parfois, une confusion de pouvoirs involontaire.’³¹ Von Graevenitz explained that a French person suspected of having committed a crime only fell under German jurisdiction if the act was committed against Germans or the German authority – in all other cases, ‘la solution de l’affaire pénale ressortit à la compétence des tribunaux français.’³² This demonstrates a German desire to maintain authority over those whose actions affected them directly, whilst distancing themselves from the more general role of peace-keeping. This may partially explain the seemingly high level of criminality, examined below. However, committing a crime against another French person often involved a breach of German regulations, such as the curfew – as well as of the *Union Sacrée*. The French juridical machinery nevertheless sputtered along with reduced powers during the occupation, with *tribunaux correctionnels* still taking place and arrest warrants still issued on behalf of local *juges d’instruction*.³³ This side of French law-and-order policies is less well documented than policing, hence the focus will be on the latter.

³¹ ADN 9R325: Procureur de la République of Lille to von Graevenitz, 12th October 1916.

³² *Ibid.*, von Graevenitz to Procureur de la République, 1st February 1917 (‘Tribunal de la Kommandantur Impériale N°286 IIIa’).

³³ See AML 4H271: report, 5-6th July; ADN 9R253: Inspecteur de l’Assistance publique du Nord to Anjubault, 29th October 1917.

The French police force faced a confusing legal situation, the threat of denunciations to the Germans, and German interference, but also dwindling numbers of personnel. The following table demonstrates the decline in police numbers for the Lille area.

Commune	N° of police before the occupation – <i>gardes champêtres</i> and <i>gardes civils</i> respectively	Number in 1916
Cysoing	4, 25	4, 14
Haubourdin	6, 51	6, 0
Lannoy	14, 60	8, 29
Lille (Nord) i.e. La Madeleine	4, 60	4, 60
Lille (Ouest)	6, 70	2, 0
Lille (Sud-Est)	14, 0	3, 0
Pont-A-Marcq	At least 1 <i>garde-champêtre</i>	2, 0
Quesnoy-sur-Deule	1, 8	1, 0
Roubaix (Ouest)	5, 24	5, 8
Seclin	1, 48, and 1 <i>garde chasse</i>	8, 0, 0
Tourcoing (Nord-Est)	12, 24	10, 0
Tourcoing (Sud)	19, 15	19, 11

34

Such was the seriousness of the manpower crisis that in March 1916 the *Commissaire Central* of Lille wrote a report explaining the current state of affairs and suggesting actions to be taken come the liberation to maintain (or restore) public order. This report also expressed fears of popular reprisals during the liberation, even summary executions, due to the number of personnel which was barely sufficient to fulfil its current duties. A plan was drawn up regarding rapid responses to and dispersal of crowds.³⁵ By October 1918, the police force of Lille had diminished so greatly that the mayor had to appeal to

³⁴ ADN 9R245: list of police personnel dated 1916, 'Département du Nord. Arrondissement de Lille.' Different statistics are provided in ADN 9R580: Commissaire Central intérimaire (de Lille), 'mésures à prendre,' 24th March 1916 (122 professional agents and 130 auxiliary agents); AML 4H274: n.a., typewritten document, 5th May 1916 (444 police personnel, including administrators).

³⁵ ADN 9R580: 'Mésures à prendre,' n.d.

those retired policemen who had not already been called up during the occupation, and others, to plug the personnel gap.³⁶

The reduced force had trouble combating criminality. This was the case regarding the *Jardin-Lardener* in the Fives-Lille area, where in May 1917 inhabitants complained that surveillance was suspended for an hour each day, and ‘on profite pour y faire des déprédations.’³⁷ The policeman guarding the *jardin* had to leave the premises for lunch, whereas before the occupation there was enough food for the guard to eat his lunch on duty. Now, the gardener acted as a replacement during the lunch break, because no other policemen were available – most also engaged in surveillance.³⁸ This hints at the scale of crime and criminality, given that nearly all locations from where goods could be stolen needed to be under constant police observation. Even a gap in the surveillance of an hour or so could lead to theft or other crimes. Indeed, on the same date, 26 locations and buildings were watched constantly by the French police, requiring a total of 55 policemen.³⁹ Sometimes *agents de l’octroi* also engaged in surveillance, particularly of *locaux d’alimentation* and *boulangeries*, although there was confusion over jurisdiction, and occasionally professional rivalries.⁴⁰

The Germans sometimes ordered the French police to increase surveillance, such as in the main railway station of Tourcoing in May 1917, where wooden planks from the fences were being stolen every day.⁴¹ This had been a problem since at least March of that year, when people were using the holes in the fence to steal more wood from inside

³⁶ AML 4H274: standard letter template from mayor to ‘Monsieur,’ 4th October 1918; letter template from the Secrétaire Général to ‘Monsieur,’ 12th October 1918.

³⁷ AML 4H274: mayor of Lille to Commissaire Central, 5th May 1917.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Commissaire Central to mayor, 8th May 1917, n°12411.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ‘Endroits où des agents sont de service en permanence,’ 3rd May 1917.

⁴⁰ AML 4H103: Président du Comité Exécutif de la Comité d’Alimentation du Nord de la France, District de Lille, to mayor, 2nd September 1916; Commissaire Central of Lille to mayor, 23rd April 1917; Directeur de l’octroi to mayor, 13th April 1917.

⁴¹ AMT H4A29: Note (n°1877) from von Tessing, Tourcoing, 26th May 1917.

the station.⁴² This suggests the willingness with which the local population would turn to theft if possible. In both cases, the blame for theft fell on the occupied population, and the responsibility for preventing further occurrences lay with the French municipality. The French police could engender punishments and criticism from the Germans by overstepping its alleged duties, but also by not going far enough in its actions; it was in this respect just like the wider occupied population, between a rock and a hard place.

The police were also prevented from other work by having to accompany the Germans during requisitions⁴³ – an act that the police viewed as a means of maintaining public order rather than collaboration. If verbal or physical disputes broke out between the French population and the Germans during requisitions, this could result in punishments for the entire population of a town or commune; by accompanying the Germans, French policemen reduced the likelihood of this. Such aid provided to the Germans by the French police gave rise to a feeling of betrayal among certain *occupés*. This sentiment is visible in the resistance tract *La Liberté*, a self-confessed ‘Bulletin de propagande patriotique’ distributed in the Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing area. In the 15th November 1915 issue, a lengthy article entitled ‘POLICE’ appeared, beginning with emotional and literary language explaining how the population had seen the ‘Gardiens vigilants’ as ‘le symbole personnifié du Patriotisme et de l’équité’ – but they were wrong, and ‘depuis le jour de la prise de possession de notre ville de Roubaix; ces pantins se sont mis à la disposition des matadors Allemands [sic], les ont cicéronnés, [sic] renseignés, servis avec une affabilité dont rougiraient les Peaux Rouges!...’⁴⁴ Condemning recent ‘mœurs brutales’ of the Roubaix police, the article noted that the only thing distinguishing the French police from the Germans was the absence of a belt buckle with *Gott mit Uns* on

⁴² *Ibid.*, n°906, 16th March 1917.

⁴³ For example, a *Commissaire de Police* of the 4th arrondissement of Lille accompanied Germans in their searches for weapons in inhabited buildings. ADN 9R581: Ville de Lille, Commissariat Central de Police, report, ‘crimes, délits, événements,’ 3-4th January 1915.

⁴⁴ ADN 3U281/77: *La Liberté* (15th November 1915).

it. The police chief was blamed for allowing French agents to become 'valets' for the Germans.⁴⁵ The disdain for and disappointment in the French police on the part of the author (and perhaps the wider population) is clear.

During the occupation the local French police force found itself under great pressure and criticism from both the French and Germans. This had a knock-on effect on criminality. Despite close German surveillance, the *occupés* were able to engage in a surprising number of criminal actions. The occupied zone became an environment in which crime could be legitimised as the best or only means of survival, and thus the moral economy was reconfigured. Such a response to the occupation was adopted by certain *occupés*, pitting survival instincts against respectability.

Theft

The most widespread crime carried out during the occupation was theft. The link between penury, hunger and theft is clear,⁴⁶ so perhaps this is unsurprising. On the other hand, this phenomenon (and crime in general) seems largely absent from post-1918 memoirs or histories, even in recent historiography.⁴⁷

Police reports for Lille and Tourcoing,⁴⁸ the *Bulletin de Lille* and German posters for all the Nord contain virtually daily accounts of theft. It is pertinent to split these into two types, matching the conflicting jurisdictions, i.e. thefts carried out to the detriment of fellow *occupés*, and those committed to the detriment of the Germans. The latter could be perceived as a form of resistance, although it would be an exaggeration to insinuate that *all* theft of German property was carried out simply because the owner was German. Becker writes of the 'délits d'ordinaire' for which the *occupés* were punished by the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.139.

⁴⁷ Becker mentions crime briefly in *ibid.*, p.242, 251-3.

⁴⁸ AMT 4J: 'Procès verbaux, judiciaires et administratives, 24 Aout 1907 au 21 sept [sic] 1916.' These reports have not been examined in detail thus are used no further.

Germans, but expands upon this by calling them ‘délits de patriotes.’⁴⁹ This seems too positive a view, an attempt to view the occupation through a monochrome filter representing an attachment to and participation in the post-war culture according to which virtually all *occupés* were resisters. Theft and crime carried out to the detriment of fellow *occupés* is a different category. This was a betrayal of the *Union Sacrée*, and of the population’s claim, often repeated or hinted at in even the most recent historiography, to be suffering together in dignity, for France.⁵⁰ In this sense, it could be said to constitute a particular brand of *mauvaise conduite* – anti-patriotic *and* criminal behaviour, rather than what was perceived as criminally unpatriotic behaviour, whatever the judicial system stated.

This examination of theft will take into account both types. However, the criminal aspect of the occupied population, concerned with survival according to a redefined moral economy, did not always make as clear-cut a distinction between the nationality of the victims of crime as will be made here. The differentiation of the two ‘victim’ groups was not necessarily made by the occupied population itself.

Thefts From Germans

Thefts committed to the detriment of individual German soldiers or ‘the German authority’ constitute those crimes that are most visible in the documentation, thus seemingly the most widespread. Such crimes were highlighted by the Germans via lists of punishments, such as in the ‘Justice Militaire Allemande’ section of the *Bulletin de Lille*. The Germans also considered ‘theft’ the possession and/or use of goods which they believed should be handed to them during requisitions, although this distinction is clear in the sentences. The thefts dealt with here are those labelled as such, rather than other crimes which could be construed as theft.

⁴⁹ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.126.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.102-3.

‘Anti-German’ thefts were commonplace. On 26th May 1916, the *Bulletin* published a warning: ‘Dans ces derniers temps, le nombre des vols d’objets, grands ou petits, commis par des gamins, sur les voitures allemandes transportant des colis postaux s’est multiplié.’ What followed was a list of punishments: 13 males sentenced to between seven and 28 days’ ‘de privation moyenne de la liberté’ and one male sentenced to 14 days’ detention. The next set of punishments would be harsher, it was stated.⁵¹ Perhaps the relatively short length of these prison sentences resulted from a lack of incarceration space caused by a large criminal population, rather than the lenience alluded to in the announcement itself. A week later, the problem had not been solved, and another notice was published in the *Bulletin*, almost word-for-word the same as the above. Only three people were punished this time,⁵² but this highlights the increasing problem of thefts from German vehicles.

Similar announcements and posters appeared throughout the occupation. Although they were supposed to underline the consequences of infractions of German regulations, they offer the historian an insight into the fact that such laws were being breached on a regular basis – and that the German régime was neither as omnipotent as it nor later occupation accounts claimed. This mirrors Taylor’s findings regarding Nord-Pas-de-Calais in World War II.⁵³ The difference in this earlier occupation was that it was both the French *and* German authorities who found themselves constrained, partly due to a less clear-cut co-operation between the two police forces.

On 26th May 1916, the *Bulletin* informed readers of the punishment of 36 individuals (25 men and 11 women) for theft since January 1916, ranging from 14 days to 7 weeks in prison.⁵⁴ This may seem like a small number over a rather long period, but it represents one of the longest lists of punished individuals appearing in the *Bulletin*,

⁵¹ *BdL*, n°121 (9th January 1916).

⁵² *Ibid.*, n°123 (16th January 1916).

⁵³ Taylor, *Between*, p.3.

⁵⁴ *BdL*, n°160 (26th May 1916).

indicating the predominance of theft of 'German-owned' goods amongst occupation crimes. These announcements also emphasise the fact that many of the perpetrators were young children, who were often left with nothing to do once schools were closed – because of lack of heating, for health reasons, or because the building or teaching material had been requisitioned by the Germans.⁵⁵ This touches upon a key occupation concern, discussed in detail later: the moral well-being of the population, particularly the youth.

French police reports hint that such a concern may have been justified, registering a fairly large number of thefts committed by youths to the detriment of the Germans, particularly from German vehicles. On 5-6th October 1916, a woman aged 52 and four boys (aged 12-14) were investigated for stealing clothes from a German transport vehicle.⁵⁶ The *procès-verbal* was carried out by French policemen, even though the 'victim' was the German authority – this was a few months before von Graevenitz outlined the jurisdictional separation, demonstrating the confused situation in which the French police found itself. French policemen, until ordered to cease, did not draw a distinction between crimes committed against Germans or fellow Frenchmen.⁵⁷

Thefts committed to the detriment of the Germans also highlight the blurring of moral boundaries. For example, on 19-20th June 1916, three men aged 17, 19, and 20 were arrested 'pour vol d'environ 50 échevaux [sic] de coton au préjudice de l'Armée allemande, pour le compte de laquelle ils travaillaient depuis quelque temps.'⁵⁸ These young men worked for the Germans, although it is not clear if they did so voluntarily. Even if they had been forced, this would still have most probably drawn them disdain from the local population; yet they also stole from the Germans. Was this a form of

⁵⁵ See, for example, ADN 9R510: von Graevenitz to Anjubault, 4th September 1917; ADHS 4M513: report n°526, 18th January 1917.

⁵⁶ AML 4H267: report, 5-6th October 1916.

⁵⁷ AML 4H266: reports, 11-12th May, and 19-20th June 1916.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20th June 1916.

resistance, a simple exploitation of the situation to increase their chances of survival, or something else?

Thefts From Fellow *Occupés*

Evidence for theft carried out by *occupés* to the detriment of compatriots at first seems harder to discover, recorded in French police documents at a time when the police was overstretched. However, evidence does exist, and serves to illuminate this rather ‘dark’ aspect of the occupation – providing another form of *mauvaise conduite* and further calling into question the almost hagiographic accounts of the occupation. Becker mentions only briefly that there were thefts committed between *occupés*,⁵⁹ but attempts no further examination. Yet François Rouesel, member of the *Chambre de Commerce* of Roubaix, hints at the extent of theft in his unpublished memoirs. He noted that despite the rigours of the German military police, the numerous imprisonments and deportations to Germany, ‘la sécurité n’a pas existé dans notre ville pendant la guerre au point de vue des vols et des cambriolages.’⁶⁰ Given the predominance of theft in occupied life suggested here, this section aims to provide the beginnings of a rectification of this historiographical oversight.

Returning to the *Bulletin*, beyond the German proclamations there is evidence of ‘inter-*occupé*’ theft in the ‘Chronique locale’ section. For example, the *Bulletin* of 18th May 1916 notes that: ‘Le 8 mai, Gruson Louis, 44 ans [...] a été arrêté pour vol de légumes, dans différents jardins [...] Il a comparu devant le Tribunal correctionnel le 10 mai, et a été condamné à 6 mois de prison, il était en état de récidive.’ This is representative because the most commonplace sub-category of theft was stealing food; it also indicates the role pre-war criminals played in occupation crime.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.252-3.

⁶⁰ ADN J1933: Rouesel manuscript, ‘Les fraudes, les vols et cambriolages [16/12/1916],’ p.1. Although Rouesel’s memoirs are mostly diary entries, often there is no date, and the entire manuscript is in no particular order.

The contents of the *Bulletin* suggest that crime continued or increased during the occupation. In March 1916, it published a warning to its readers to be wary of pickpockets who had been operating at the *Marché de Wazemmes* and the *locaux de ravitaillement*.⁶¹ The existence of pick-pockets at a market, especially one in a working-class *quartier* of Lille like Wazemmes, is hardly shocking. What is striking, though, is the need to publish such a warning, presumably to inform readers of the (growing?) scale of the problem. A few months later, a pickpocket was caught red-handed: the 37 year-old woman was found in possession of purses, wallets, and ID cards, and sent to the *Maison d'arrêt*.⁶² The theft of identity cards could have led to serious punishment for the owners.⁶³

There is some evidence of organised crime during the occupation and the extremes to which it led people. In Lille on 21st December 1915 the body of a *sergent de ville* was found in a pond. Investigations concluded that he had been murdered, and quickly led to the arrest of four men between 27 and 32 years old recently suspected of stealing poultry in the neighbourhood. The sergeant had been keeping these men under surveillance, which one of the suspects admitted was the reason for his murder.⁶⁴ The surprisingly rapid arrests demonstrate that the French police was not entirely powerless. Perhaps it was only the murder that spurred the police into action, with thieving so widespread and commonplace that until a more serious crime was committed the police would or could not intervene, merely watch.

A 'bande de malfaiteurs' operated in Roubaix, and one of its leaders was executed in 1917 for possessing a revolver.⁶⁵ He had twice been arrested for theft during the

⁶¹ *BdL*, n°144 (30th March 1916).

⁶² *Ibid.*, n°176 (20th July 1916).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, n°169 (25th June 1916); ADN 9R746: German poster, Tourcoing, 12th July 1916, stating that anyone found without a valid ID card is liable to be considered as a spy or a hidden Allied soldier.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, n°118 (30th December 1915).

⁶⁵ ADN 9R732: German poster, Roubaix, 30th June 1917.

occupation, and before the war 'se livrait à la rapine.'⁶⁶ Therefore, strict German curbs on everyday activity did not manage to stop criminal actions, even (especially?) those of organised gangs of pre-war criminals.

The *Bulletin* also highlights frequent 'small-scale' thefts, presumably carried out by desperate individuals. For instance, the 6th June 1916 issue contained ten mentions of theft, whether thefts committed since the last issue four days before, or those *charged* with theft during this period.⁶⁷ These reports were so frequent that, presumably to counterbalance the damaging effect on the population's morale, a section entitled 'Acte de probité' was sometimes published. An example of this is a man who found 100 bread tickets and returned them to their owner, earning the *Bulletin's* congratulations.⁶⁸ Thus not every item that disappeared was necessarily stolen, although it seems that this was probably the case for most 'disappearances.'

Directly after the tragedy of the explosion of the *Dix-huit ponts* of 11th January 1916,⁶⁹ the *Bulletin* informed its readers that some unscrupulous individuals were taking advantage of the situation by entering the ruins and stealing goods. One such person was caught and condemned to two months' imprisonment. The article ends with a plea: 'Respectez donc le malheur! Respectez les ruines!'⁷⁰ Thus the ruins of the explosion of the *Dix-huit ponts* were not being respected, just as the ruins of the invaded territories themselves were not, despite calls for dignity and fraternity in suffering. Indeed, other examples mentioned in the *Bulletin* are equally striking, such as thefts from churches⁷¹ or tombs.⁷² These may reflect the reconfigured moral economy, the way in which criminality permeated occupied life, and the extremes to which people were pushed by

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, typewritten document, n.d., n.a, probably a police document.

⁶⁷ *BdL*, n°172 (6th July 1916).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, n°173 (9th July 1916).

⁶⁹ The explosion of a munitions depot led to 134 dead (including 30 Germans) and up to 400 injured. See Wallart, *Nord*, p.49.

⁷⁰ *BdL*, n°126 (27th January 1916).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, n°176 (20th July 1916).

⁷² *Ibid.*, n°164 (8th June 1916).

hunger and penury. Whatever the case, the *Bulletin's* constant reports of thefts of foodstuffs,⁷³ clothes and shoes,⁷⁴ as well as money and various objects,⁷⁵ presents an image of widespread 'inter-occupé' theft.

The French Police and Theft

Police reports offer further insight into criminality, allowing an assessment of the constituency of the criminal population. Examples of youths committing crime abound. This is particularly the case for another type of theft: those carried out from new organisations which had a particular set of consequences unique to the occupation, i.e. thefts to the detriment of the population as a whole, and the town. This comprised stealing goods belonging to the CRB or the CANF, overwhelmingly carried out by children or adolescents. In Lille, between 23rd and 30th November 1917 alone, six boys aged between 10 and 15 were the subject of *procès-verbaux* for having stolen foodstuffs and other goods from CANF transportation vehicles.⁷⁶ The young constituency of the criminal population may be due to the demographic changes of the war and the occupation; it was perhaps inevitable that youths formed the backbone of the new 'criminal class' – or at least the 'thieving class.' Perhaps some parents encouraged their children to commit such acts, hoping that their infantile status would protect them from the harshest of punishments. However, the Germans made it clear that parents would be punished for the misbehaviour of their children.⁷⁷ No matter the reason, children and adolescents were often involved in occupation crime.

Yet youths were not alone in committing thefts to the detriment of the CRB/CANF. These thefts took place since the CANF's inception and grew in scale throughout the

⁷³ From vegetables to live rabbits and chickens. See the 'Chronique locale' in *BdL*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, n°174 (13th July 1916) and 175 (16th July 1916).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, n°163 (4th June 1916), 164, 165 (11th June 1916), 166 (16th June 1916), 174, 175 (16th July 1916), and 176.

⁷⁶ AML 4H269: reports of 23-4th, 27-8th, 29-30th November 1917.

⁷⁷ ADN 9R718: German poster, Roubaix and Tourcoing, 8th September 1916.

war. In May 1917, thefts from supply wagons were affecting the relief effort.⁷⁸ At the end of February 1918, two women and a man were arrested for having stolen regularly from the CANF over a period of 18 to 20 weeks,⁷⁹ and in July one young man of 17 stole 17,852 francs 'au préjudice de la Ville.'⁸⁰ On one night in August 1918, 480 boxes of condensed milk were stolen from the CANF depot at the Descamps factory in Lille,⁸¹ where dozens more had been stolen the preceding March.⁸² Further, CANF dock workers repeatedly stole goods in 1918.⁸³

The French were willing to work with the Germans in order to prevent these crimes. At the end of May 1917 the mayor of Lille informed the *Kommandantur* that thefts of eggs from wagons were becoming more frequent. The preceding day, almost 1,000 eggs had been stolen.⁸⁴ This foreshadows the situation in the Second World War, whereby French authorities were most willing to work with the Germans regarding food provisioning.⁸⁵ Sometimes the authors of these thefts were discovered, providing a warning against oversimplified conclusions concerning criminality. In January 1918, for example, it was discovered that the authors of the theft of briquettes from the local coal depot were in fact German soldiers,⁸⁶ and from February to April 1918 further thefts were attributed to Germans, notably from CANF wagons and depots.⁸⁷ However, most thieves were *occupés*, as the numerous accusations of those working for the CANF attest.⁸⁸

⁷⁸ AML 4H103: CANF members Le Blan and Vanbrse to unknown, 1st May 1917.

⁷⁹ AML 4H270: report, 28th February-1st March 1918.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-6th July 1918.

⁸¹ AML 4H271: report, 29-30th August 1918.

⁸² AML 4H270: reports, 4-5th March, and 15-16th March 1918. On both occasions 48 boxes of milk were stolen.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 15-16th January, 15-16th February, 23-24th April 1918, 15-16th June, 2-3rd July, 30-31st July, 19-20th August 1918.

⁸⁴ AML 4H103: mayor to Kommandantur, 30th May 1917.

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Between*, pp.30-37.

⁸⁶ AML 4H103: report, Corsin, 29th January 1918.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Juge d'instruction à Lille to mayor, 25th February 1918; Commissaire Central de Lille to mayor, 1st and 5th April 1918; mayor to Police Militaire, 12th August 1918.

⁸⁸ See, for example, *ibid.*, Directeur des Finances to M. Leconte, 24th December 1917. Here, every time sugar was unloaded a certain quantity went missing, putting suspicion on the workers, thus from then onwards CANF workers were to be subjected to searches.

Police reports suggest there was a correlation between the number of thefts committed and the length of the occupation – unsurprising given the increased suffering and hunger as the war continued. However, reports for Lille regarding 1914 and 1915 are incomplete, because of the fire at the *hôtel de ville* in April 1916.⁸⁹ This may give a distorted view of events. Yet it seems that until mid-1915, the French police were concerned mostly with maintaining good relations between the local population and the Germans, performing tasks such as investigating thefts carried out to the detriment of the Germans,⁹⁰ and sometimes crimes committed by Germans.⁹¹ From 1916 onwards, the police focused mainly on theft, both to the detriment of the aid organisations or the town, and against individuals. In August 1916 there were no fewer than 27 recorded thefts (or people arrested or investigated for theft) in Lille.⁹² There was at least a theft a day for all but 3 days of the month.⁹³ Many involved youths (particularly boys) stealing potatoes or coal.⁹⁴

Mauvaise conduite and pure criminality did not always go hand-in-hand. On 12-13th August 1916, 22,000 francs was stolen from Mme Rosse, ‘tenancière de la maison de tolérance.’⁹⁵ This was a large sum, even given inflation which that year meant a loaf bread cost 6 francs,⁹⁶ suggesting that Rosse’s clients were Germans and her trade booming. Perhaps stealing from such a woman would have been regarded as preferable to stealing from the CANF/CRB, although as this chapter demonstrates, the moral economy of some *occupés* was as broken as the financial economy. Penury naturally provided ample motives for crime. Such reasoning is apparent in the words of the *occupés* themselves. Four people were arrested and interrogated by French police for

⁸⁹ See Wallart, *Nord*, p.49. Archivists have confirmed the role of the fire in this.

⁹⁰ See, for example, ADN 9R581: report, 9-10th January 1915.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15th December 1914.

⁹² AML 4H266: reports, 31st July-1st August until 29-30th August 1916, excluding 29-30th August, 28-9th August, and 19-20th August.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, report, 31st July-1st August 1916.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, reports, 1st-2nd August, 3-4th August, and 4-5th August 1916.

⁹⁵ AML 4H266: report, 12-13th August 1916.

⁹⁶ McPhail, *Silence*, p.83.

stealing from Lille's wood depot in April 1918.⁹⁷ All gave similar statements to 48 year-old Arthur Dumont, who admitted to the theft, but justified his actions because his family had been without coal for six days. It was the first time he stole wood;⁹⁸ indeed, the attached reports on the individuals charged stated that all had good habitual conduct and morality. They and their families were well noted in the commune, and they were not drunks, debauched, libertines, and did not live in concubinage.⁹⁹ In short, they were upstanding, respectable members of the community, who seem to have turned to theft as a last resort, out of a survival instinct brought on by the hardships of the occupation. They were not prime examples of unrespectable, antipatriotic *mauvaise conduite*.

Yet criminality was its own form of misconduct, and demonstrates that – contrary to much literature on the occupation – not all *occupés* lived in solidarity. The reality was more complex. In May 1917, the *Commissaire Central* of Roubaix wrote to the mayor, explaining the criminal situation. He spoke of thefts caused by hunger and injustice, and of the idea that many were profiting from the war. The springboard for this message was ‘une affaire de vol qui paraît conçu sous l’empire des sentiments méritant d’être relevés et auxquels il faut prêter une réelle attention.’ That afternoon, three mothers had entered an *épicerie* and picked up 5kg of beans, leaving 5fr in payment. Yet they had been informed that, rather than the 1fr a kilogram they had paid, the beans cost 6.5fr a kilo. Consequently, the owner gave chase – a passing policeman intervened and took all involved persons to the *Commissariat*. The *Commissaire* stated: ‘l’égalité dans le malheur est une fiction navrante.’ He explained that everyday ‘le scandale augmente, la spéculation n’a plus de frein’ and the poor were dying of hunger – which he feared could lead to pillage. ‘On murmure très fort, on supporte mal les provocations qui s’aggravent et l’affaiblissement physique produit son reflexe [sic] sur le moral qui s’affaisse et sur la

⁹⁷ AML 4H270: report, Commissariat de Police du 7^e arrondissement, n°706, citing the report of Alphone Moisson, 15th April 1918.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, n°706 A, ‘Explications du Dumont Arthur.’

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, ‘Tribunal de Lille, Parquet du Procureur de la Publique – Renseignements concernant Dumont Arthur inculpé de vol à bois [...],’ 17th April 1918.

¹⁰¹ ADN 9R731: Commissaire Central of Roubaix to mayor, 30th May 1917.

conscience, qui, tout à l'heure, ne réagira plus... [sic]' The *Commissaire* wanted to signal

la situation d'un côté le peuple qui hurle à la faim mais qu'un reste de conscience maintient encore dans la bonne voie et d'autre part les exploiters – ils sont légion – qui vivant bien, noçant sans se cacher, se permettent toutes les fantaisies, haussent à leur gré les produits de toute nécessité sans se soucier des grincements de la population affamée.¹⁰¹

The occupied Nord was not an exemplar of patriotic unity; criminal and other *mauvaise conduite* were widespread, worrying the *Commissaire*.

It is impossible to know whether survival was the motive for crimes, but desperation rather than targeted malice most probably guided the actions of many thieves of the occupation. Yet there is evidence of theft from the very aid organisations that were helping to ameliorate the situations engendering crime. Such confusion is also evident in discussions of non-criminal *mauvaise conduite* – and for some, like diarist Suzanne Beck from the occupied Aisne, the connections were evident. She linked personal and sexual morality:

voleuses, délatrices, prostituées, appartiennent au même groupe, voire sont les mêmes personnes; elle accuse la pauvreté, l'exclusion, la solitude, et ne s'étonne donc pas que les réfugiées, des quasi-étrangères, soient en première ligne des "femmes à soldats", certaines se retrouvant "en situation intéressante".¹⁰²

Such a link was often drawn in the later investigations into sexual misconduct, with details of thefts seen to reinforce the case for *mauvaise conduite*¹⁰³ – moral, sexual and patriotic perversity were inextricably linked. Becker suggests that German requisitions constituted legalised theft,¹⁰⁴ which altered the moral situation in which the *occupés* found themselves. The impact of German pillage and the hunger and poverty caused by the occupation may indeed have altered the moral compass of the population, just as

¹⁰² Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.242.

¹⁰³ See ADN 9R1196, *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.252.

front-line soldiers of both sides often turned to theft for survival.¹⁰⁵ The Germans had legitimised theft as a means of access to social goods, and the occupied population itself internalised and acted upon such reasoning: the moral economy was thus reconfigured. The line between criminal instinct and survival is equally blurred when examining other types of crime.

Fraud and Speculation

Fraud encompasses numerous criminal activities, but its meaning here includes 'escroquerie,' 'détournement' of goods and money, as well as profiteering, the fabrication of false money and the illegal selling of goods. Also included is a crime particular to the occupation, that of being a *ravitailleur*, i.e. someone who transported goods (particularly foodstuffs) across communal and national borders in order to sell them to the occupied population. For the occupying Germans, fraud consisted of possessing and/or selling contraband, including the selling of goods without declaring the sale. Punishment ranged from four weeks' 'arrêt' up to 5 years in prison and a 10,000-Mark fine.¹⁰⁶ Depending on who the 'victims' were, and on the specific nature of the crime, fraud can thus be perceived as a form of *mauvaise conduite criminelle*. The occupied and non-occupied population was united in its contempt for those considered 'war profiteers,'¹⁰⁷ people exploiting the wartime situation to enrich themselves. Yet fraud may in some cases be perceived as a form of resistance. Speculation is often indistinguishable from fraud, and is naturally a key feature of war profiteering. Black markets, fraud, and speculation, are common phenomena during military occupations and at home fronts during total war.¹⁰⁸ In this respect, the situation in northern France was similar to that in

¹⁰⁵ This is reflected in the war literature, such as Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (London, 2003; originally Paris, 1916), (trans.) Robin Buss, p.163-4; and Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel* (London, 2003; originally Berlin, 1920), (trans.) Michael Hofmann, p.131-3.

¹⁰⁶ ADN 9R718: German poster, Roubaix, 30th November 1916.

¹⁰⁷ Flood, *Public Opinion*, p.125; Thébaud, *Femme*, pp.211-223.

¹⁰⁸ Proctor, *Civilians*, p.89-90.

Belgium,¹⁰⁹ and had parallels with Second-World-War France.¹¹⁰ However, these themes have received little attention regarding northern France in the First World War.

Fraud Concerning Aid Organisations

On 3rd April 1916, the CANF warned the occupied population that its goods could not be sold to anyone else. It also reiterated the extraordinary nature of the CRB and CANF's efforts – goods had been transported across the Atlantic, then to Holland, through Belgium, and to northern France, without a single centime of personal profit. As such, 'En face de ce désintéressement universel, aucun Français, nous en sommes certains, ne voudra compromettre le bon renom de notre région du Nord, en spéculant sur le prix de vivres dont chaque parcelle est due à des efforts uniquement inspirés par le dévouement [sic] et la générosité.'¹¹¹ However, another poster warned that re-selling of CANF goods was continuing to occur, comprising 'opérations scandaleuses' which could lead to a cessation of all aid, endangering the lives of the entire occupied population.¹¹² This was not mere rhetoric, as it had only been with considerable effort that the 'soul of the CRB' Herbert Hoover¹¹³ and others had convinced the Allies to allow CRB/CANF goods to bypass the blockade. The British in particular feared that the Germans would seize the goods themselves, leading to tight restrictions on the functioning of the aid operations, including an agreement with the Germans not to requisition CRB goods.¹¹⁴ Members of the occupied population selling CRB/CANF goods broke these regulations – particularly if they sold their goods to Germans.

¹⁰⁹ See de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.118 and 232.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, Vinen, *Unfree*, pp. 215-246; Taylor, *Between*, and idem, 'The Black Market in Occupied Northern France, 1940-44,' *Contemporary European History*, 6:2 (1997), pp. 153-176. For a fictional account of the grey area between collaboration, fraud, profiteering, and resistance in the Second World War, see Jean Dutourd, *Au Bon Beurre: Scènes de la vie sous l'Occupation* (Barcelona, 1972; originally Paris, 1952).

¹¹¹ AML 4H103: CANF, District de Lille, 'Avertissement au Public,' 3rd April 1916.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, CANF, District de Lille, 'AVIS AU PUBLIC CONCERNANT LA REVENTE DES DENRÉES, CHAUSSURES OU VETEMENTS [sic] distribuées par les Comités de ravitaillement du Nord de la France,' n.d.

¹¹³ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.141.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.141-5; McPhail, *Silence*, p.62-3; Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.193.

CRB/CANF regulations were legally binding. The mayor of Lille noted that each inhabitant was only entitled to an amount of goods matching personal or family needs, and that the observation of this condition was itself crucial to the continuation of such aid in the commune.¹¹⁵ Any infraction of this constituted criminal fraud. Yet CANF-related fraud was a persistent thorn in the French authorities' side, despite the willingness of the *Juge d'instruction* to issue arrest warrants for suspects.¹¹⁶ This was why French police and *agents de l'octroi* monitored *ravitaillement* buildings.¹¹⁷ Further posters invoking the *Code pénal* appeared regularly to remind the population of the illegality and repercussions of CANF fraud.¹¹⁸ This did not solve the problem: for instance, from September to mid-December 1916, 35 abuses occurred across Lille, including attempting to procure goods without a valid card, theft, taking more than the permitted ration, and attempting to bribe a guard.¹¹⁹

The population itself believed in widespread CANF-related fraud and price-hikes on the part of bakers and food sellers, but also on the part of the local administration and CANF employees. Abuses of power were perceived to be taking place in *mairies* across the Nord. The mood and logic was very similar to that visible in Belgium, where 'La hantise du profitariat était bien ancrée.' With so many people receiving aid, 'il devait donc – se disait-on – fatalement y avoir de l'abus.' It was clear that some profited from the situation, leading to the opinion: 'Endurer patriotiquement la pénurie, tout cela était bel et bien, mais pourquoi était-ce toujours aux mêmes de donner l'exemple?'¹²⁰

Such was the strength of this belief and the accompanying disgust that in April 1917 the mayor of Lille put up a poster rubbishing such rumours. He warned the population

¹¹⁵ AML 4H103: Maire de Lille, 'Extrait du Registre aux Arrêtés du Maire de Lille,' n°1679, 18th March 1918.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, AML 4H270: report, 12-13th March 1918.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, AML 4H103: Directeur de l'octroi, CANF, District de Lille,' 13th April 1917.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, CANF, 'Avertissement au public,' 3rd April 1916. This poster invoked articles 491, 496 and 505 of the *Code pénal* providing punishments for those caught engaging in fraud.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, mayor to CANF, 18th December 1916.

¹²⁰ De Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.233.

against ‘des rumeurs calomniatrices que des personnes mal informées ou de mauvaise foi font courir dans notre population’ which spread ‘grâce aux conditions dans lesquelles nous vivons, avec une déplorable intensité.’ These ‘attaques aussi odieuses qu’injustifiées’ targeted men who had devoted soul and body to *ravitaillement* for more than two years, who were above all suspicion and who deserved the admiration and gratitude of everyone. The mayor admitted that such a complex operation may have led to some minor abuses, and concluded:

Il est donc temps que cette campagne d’insinuations perfides s’arrête, et nous sommes décidés à déférer à la Justice les calomniateurs sans scrupule qui chercheraient à ternir la réputation de vos concitoyens les plus méritants et les plus dévoués.

Vous avez fait preuve, dans les terribles années que nous traversons, d’un esprit de patience, de concorde et de solidarité dont je vous suis profondément reconnaissant, et je ne doute pas que vous soyez décidés à y persévérer jusqu’au bout.¹²¹

Key themes of the occupation are visible here: the idea of inter-French solidarity, the importance of respectability and thus the painfulness of accusations of wrongdoing, and the heavy burden laid upon French municipalities and administrators. Such a poster seems to reflect the post-war view of *mauvaise conduite*, i.e. that a small minority acted badly and unpatriotically, and to insinuate that this was any more than a fringe occurrence is unpatriotic and simply mistaken. Yet the poster also demonstrates the fracturing of the *Union Sacrée*, the strength of rumours and internecine squabbles amongst the occupied population, a fracturing caused by widespread *perception* of misconduct, whatever the realities.

Suspicion of CANF fraud was also common in Roubaix and Tourcoing, where the mayors followed the same pattern, highlighting the selflessness and importance of the CANF’s mission, and not allowing a few mistakes to undermine the entire project.¹²² In November 1916, anonymous handwritten posters appeared across Tourcoing in local

¹²¹ AML 4H103: poster, mayor of Lille, 7th April 1917.

¹²² ADN 9R752: Réunion générale des employés du ravitaillement, 6th October [seemingly 1916].

CANF depots and markets, accusing its employees of fraud and favouritism. Friends of the mayor were said to benefit from better rations than the wider population, whilst the CANF employees themselves were accused of passing goods ‘entre amis.’¹²³ In response, the mayor published a poster underlining the integrity of the provisioning process and its personnel, and explaining that fraud could not happen because of the various checks and measures in place. Those few cases of wrongdoing that had existed were dealt with rapidly, and indeed could not function for an extended period due to surveillance.¹²⁴ Despite this, the *Commissaire Central* was concerned that this campaign of ‘dénigrement systématique’ might outlast the occupation, as it appeared to have a political bent. The Socialist Party in particular seemed ‘très documenté sur ce qui se passe à l’alimentation.’¹²⁵ There is a suggestion here that such a campaign might actually be justified by the actions of the CANF. Similar ‘diffamations’ were made against the CANF committee and municipality of Roubaix.¹²⁶

On occasions the wider occupied population seemed correct in its suspicion of CANF members. In Lille, a 65 year-old CANF *contrôleur* was found guilty of fraud involving paid subscriptions in return for coal that never materialised. He was charged and sent to the *Parquet*.¹²⁷ In Hellemmes, the adjunct to the mayor and member of the local CANF branch was relieved of his functions on 3rd October 1917. He had breached numerous regulations, although actually to the population’s benefit, such as giving people flour as well as their bread rations.¹²⁸ The CANF operation, therefore, seems to have provided the perfect breeding ground for fraud.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Commissaire Central de Tourcoing to Prefect, 8th November 1916.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Avertissement, mayor of Tourcoing, 6th November 1916.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Commissaire Central to Prefect, 8th November 1916.

¹²⁶ ADN 9R731: Commissaire Central de Roubaix, ‘RAVITAILLEMENT: AFFAIRE DE BRABANDER, Centre VILLE [sic]: Intervention Officielle du Commissaire Central. Plainte en diffamation contre M. VALLE GUSTAVE. Boucher-Chevillier,’ 14th May 1917.

¹²⁷ AML 4H117: M. Laurel to mayor, 12th December 1916.

¹²⁸ ADN 9R515: ‘Delesalle, adjoint au maire, 1917’ file, *passim*.

Other Fraud

The wider population also engaged in various forms of fraud. In an inter-war book of occupation poetry, a poem entitled 'Fraudeuse' (dated July 1916) attacks a woman who stole grain in order to make bread,¹²⁹ depriving fellow *occupés* of their grain ration. The poem reflected reality: most recorded cases of fraud concern bakers or their assistants procuring excess grain or bread for themselves, using CANF grain in their products; or members of the wider population purchasing such contraband bread.¹³⁰ This blurs the line between theft and fraud. Such was the scale of fraud by 1916 that the municipality of Lille upped its surveillance of goods and food depots, actively punishing culprits.¹³¹ This phenomenon was not confined to Lille: in Tourcoing in December 1916, the police launched a series of raids to seize fraudently-acquired foodstuffs, especially rice, from shopkeepers.¹³² From then on, French authorities were obsessed with curbing fraud. Usually, once someone was caught red-handed,¹³³ the municipality demanded that they pay a fine. Only after a refusal to do so would the decision to pursue judicial action or remove them from their job be taken.¹³⁴

This obsession was justified, as the scale of fraud was enormous, and suspects were sometimes involved in other *mauvaise conduite*. In Lille, in June 1918, nine men were arrested by the French police on suspicion of trafficking various goods, from sugar to gold. Their houses or establishments were searched. Many of these men had links to the Germans, having engaged in commerce with them, or having frequented German establishments and personnel. Most had previous criminal records and were considered

¹²⁹ Jules Mousseron, *Les Boches au Pays Noir: Souvenirs de la Guerre et de l'occupation allemande – Poésies patoises* (Lille, 1931), p.63.

¹³⁰ See AML 4H103: Report, Vérificateur de l'Octroi de Lille, n.d. but speaking about events on 14th December 1916. Fourteen other detailed reports can be found here, in which *agents de l'octroi* stopped suspicious *occupés* leaving *boulangeries* or food depots and discovered hidden food on their person.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, Directeur de l'Octroi to mayor, 13th April 1917.

¹³² *Ibid.*, Directeur des Services Financiers de Lille, 'Saisie du riz à Tourcoing,' 21st December 1916.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, M. Gustave Duneufgardin, Greffier, Tribunal de simple police de Lille, 'Jugement Contradictoire, M.P. et BECKER Léa,' 29th September 1917.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, *passim*. For example, mayor to Mme Westeen, 6th December 1917.

as being of dubious morality.¹³⁵ These arrests were part of a police operation to discover who had been illegally hoarding sugar – in the preceding days, all sugar supplies in Lille had dried up, before hundreds of kilograms reappeared at considerably inflated prices.¹³⁶ The Germans slowed proceedings, especially because numerous suspects worked in banks controlled by the Germans. Soldiers explained that goods seized by the French police that had been bought from Germans could not be confiscated.¹³⁷ The suspects also attempted to play the Germans against the French police, sometimes successfully,¹³⁸ but some policemen nevertheless prevailed: in one shop, they discovered 77 100kg-sacks of crystallised sugar, a crate containing a dozen kilograms of sugar ‘en morceaux,’ and two cellars brimming with an estimated 400 cases of sugar (containing about 25kg each).¹³⁹

However, fraud did not comprise the purchase or selling of contraband foodstuffs alone. In Lille, a man was sentenced by the *Tribunal correctionnel* to 8 days’ imprisonment and a fine of 200 francs for the creation and sale of a ‘poudre de savon’ which contained no soap. His punishment was to serve as an example to the numerous other speculators and falsifiers who ‘ont une pièce de monnaie [...] à la place du cœur,’ and whose god was their wallet.¹⁴⁰ Making and selling alcohol – banned by French and German authorities in the occupied area in 1914¹⁴¹ – was another form of fraud.¹⁴² It was dangerous in other ways: in Tourcoing in 1916, a man was blinded and another two died after drinking

¹³⁵ ADN 9R328: Commissaire de Police [Trioly], ‘Renseignements sur des personnes chez lesquelles les perquisitions ont été opérées au sujet d’accaparement des sucres et autres denrées,’ 27th June 1918.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, ‘Rapport concernant l’accaparement des sucres,’ 27th June 1918.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, ‘Renseignements.’

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, ‘Rapport.’

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, Ville de Lille: Commissariat de Police du 6^e arrondissement, report n°201, Commissaire Edmont Molinier, 14th June 1918.

¹⁴⁰ AML 4H103: Tribunal Correctionnel, Audience du 29 Juillet 1916.

¹⁴¹ Benoît, ‘L’état sanitaire,’ p.100. See ADN 9R518: French poster by Anjubault, ‘Danger de consommer actuellement DES ALCOOLS ET DES BOISSONS ALCOOLIQUES,’ 30th November 1916.

¹⁴² ADN 9R328: ‘Renseignements.’ *Lillois* Pierre Ernest Durand, a wine-seller before the war, made his own wine during the occupation. See also ADN M417/10139 regarding clandestine distilleries in Lille in 1917.

home-made gin.¹⁴³ Overall, alcohol fraud was relatively limited. Another type, however, was more widespread: smuggling.

Fonceurs and ravitailleurs

Two terms were used to describe those engaging in smuggling – *fonceurs* and *ravitailleurs* – both loaded with positive and negative connotations, reinforcing the grey moral area in which such activities were located. According to Redier, *fonceur* meant different things in war and peace. In peacetime, *fonceurs* were ‘fraudeurs audacieux qui brûlent la politesse aux douaniers et passent la frontière par d’incroyable chemins connus d’eux seuls.’ In wartime, he maintains, ‘foncer’ became a profession unto itself, a lucrative occupation for people with little or no honesty willing to buy goods in one area, and resell them for scandalous prices elsewhere. However, *foncer* was sometimes an honourable action involving celebrated resisters such as Louise de Bettignies and Louise Thuliez (accomplices of Redier’s wife, Léonie Vanhoutte).¹⁴⁴ Similarly, in his memoirs, Fernand Heusghem recalls that ‘contrebandiers’ provided much-needed goods for the occupied population.¹⁴⁵ A distinction must be made, then, between simply crossing the border, and doing so specifically to procure goods which could later be sold (i.e. smuggling). Some historians have made such a differentiation, or see a difference in treatment between *fraudeurs* and *passeurs*,¹⁴⁶ and between black marketeering and ‘ravitaillement clandestin.’¹⁴⁷

In reality, however, many *occupés* conflated the two categories – and more frequently focused on the negative side of smuggling. On 7th April 1916, Blin wrote of ‘Le commerce lucratif des fonceurs’ which was ‘momentanément arrêté.’¹⁴⁸ The word ‘lucratif’ has inherently negative connotations when used in this period of penury. For

¹⁴³ AMT H4A27: Anjubault to mayor of Tourcoing, 30th November 1916.

¹⁴⁴ Redier, *Allemands*, p.150.

¹⁴⁵ Fernand Heusghem, *Jeunesse 1914-1918: Souvenirs de l’occupation* (Paris, 1938), p.31.

¹⁴⁶ Deruyk, *Louise*, p.80.

¹⁴⁷ Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.63; Taylor, ‘Black Market,’ p.172.

¹⁴⁸ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 7th April 1916.

the local newspaper *Le Progrès du Nord*, such actions were unquestionably negative. Reappearing after the liberation, on 22nd November 1918 a list of five grievances were published on the front page. Two of these relate to *ravitailleurs* or fraudsters: ‘Les aigrefins de l’occupation sont toujours les maîtres du pavé’ and ‘Quelques-uns des ravitailleurs qui nous ont exploités sont toujours là.’¹⁴⁹ In occupied Roubaix, François Rouesel remarked that there was only one way to procure food:

c’était d’aller en chercher à la frontière belge ou d’en acheter aux fraudeurs. Mais la frontière était soigneusement gardée par les troupes [...] Tous les jours, les prisons de Roubaix étaient remplies de malheureux qui avaient été arrêtés pour avoir rapporté quelque kilogs [sic] de pommes de terre de la frontière.¹⁵⁰

Rouesel was sympathetic towards such people but his attitude evolved as the occupation continued. So frequent were such actions that by the end of 1916, ‘Le nom même de fraudeurs disparut pour faire place à celui de “fonceurs”, pour désigner ceux qui passaient la frontière pour en apporter des marchandises prohibées.’ Further, ‘La partie calme et sérieuse de la population faisait même à ces fonceurs un accueil sympathique, puisqu’ils lui apportaient, à des prix élevés sans doute, des produits d’alimentation qu’elle n’aurait pu se procurer sans eux.’¹⁵¹ This illustrates the moral minefield regarding the smuggling of goods and the existence of a black market. Rouesel was concerned that the dishonour associated with being a fraudster had disappeared, which could be dangerous for the future:

On oublie que la guerre ne durera pas toujours et qu’une fois la paix rétablie, il faudra rétablir en même temps la moralité publique, réagir sévèrement contre des fraudes si on ne veut faire de la jeune population ouvrière qui a désappris le travail et qui s’est habitué [sic] à cette existence irrégulière, une pépinière de fraudeurs capables de devenir ensuite des voleurs, puis des cambrioleurs et jusqu’à des assassins.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *Progrès* (22nd November 1918).

¹⁵⁰ ADN J1933: Rouesel manuscript, ‘L’Alimentation de la population,’ p.3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, ‘Les fraudes, les vols et cambriolages [16/12/1916],’ p.2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.3.

A similarly negative view of *ravitailleurs* can be found in an undated poem concerning Lille, which called *ravitailleurs* unscrupulous ‘fieffés voleurs’ who had ‘l’assiette au beurre/Pour eux et pour les leurs,/Ils rognent nos rations/Pour emplir leurs bedons.’ The final stanza is perplexing, perhaps signifying the suspicion with which women in the occupied area were regarded, and maybe further crossover between sexual *mauvaise conduite* and criminal misconduct:

MORALITÉ
Cherchez toujours la femme
Le mâle est dans la femme.¹⁵³

Others had a sharper understanding of the grey area of smuggling and black-market provision of goods. Repatriated *Nordistes* noted that there were many *ravitailleurs* at Valenciennes, some of whom were ostensibly given permission to cross the border by the Germans – in return for a cut of their profits. These ‘individus exempts de tout scrupule’ may have been ‘complices ou agents des Allemands et chargés de mission au cours de leurs déplacements en Belgique.’ However, at the same time the importance of the provision of goods by *ravitailleurs* for the population, and the confusing relationship between the two groups, was acknowledged:

Les rapatriés de Valenciennes reconnaissent volontiers que la population entretien [sic] et provoque l’existence même des ravitailleurs, car si elle n’achetait pas les denrées que ceux-ci vendent, leur commerce tomberait de lui-même. Mais si la population qui souffre des privations a des excuses, sa défaillance n’exclut pas le jugement sévère qui doit frapper ces mercantis, haïs de tous les habitants.¹⁵⁴

Thus the perception of *ravitailleurs/fonceurs* held by the occupied population at large and both occupied and non-occupied French authorities remained overwhelmingly one of suspicion. Many interviews of *rapatriés* focus on this point. It was often suggested that *ravitailleurs/fonceurs* were in the pocket of the Germans, procuring gold for the

¹⁵³ AML 4H103: printed poem, n.d., n.a.

¹⁵⁴ ADHS 4M513: report n°769, 19th February 1917, summary of interviews with 471 people from the Nord.

latter, denouncing compatriots, or working for the German counter-espionage service,¹⁵⁵ even if their actions occasionally ‘rend service à la population.’¹⁵⁶

Whatever the perception of smugglers by the *occupés*, the occupants themselves drew no distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ smuggling, an opinion that would be carried into World War II.¹⁵⁷ Heusghem stated that when ‘contrebandiers’ were caught by the Germans, they were tortured.¹⁵⁸ Little evidence corroborates this, but it is clear that the Germans took the matter seriously: in a single day in 1915, more than 100 *ravitailleurs* were arrested in Fourmies, although there was no fixed organisation dedicated to this, and the quantities of goods involved were quite meagre.¹⁵⁹

Barbed wire fences were built at the Belgian border, guarded by constant patrols. Initially implemented to prevent the emigration of young men from the occupied area,¹⁶⁰ these measures also targeted fraud and smuggling. The Germans were concerned by any border crossing, for military and intelligence reasons. For *occupés*, crossing the Belgian frontier was the best means of procuring rare items, as Belgium’s relatively more comfortable occupation made various goods easier to find here.¹⁶¹ The importance of the border for both the French and Germans is evident in the few existing statistics for the border town of Wattrelos. From January to September 1916 a total of 32 people were injured attempting to cross, buy or sell goods at the border, 30 of whom were shot by German sentries; 11 of these 30 were killed. Most (19) were adolescents or children –

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, report n°735, 14th February 1917 (Cambrai); n°746, 15th February 1917 (Anzin); n°753, 16th February 1917 (Denain); n°796, 23rd February 1917 (Valenciennes); n°830, 24th February 1917 (Fourmies); n°916, 8th March 1917 (Lille); n°952, 12th March 1917 (Lille); ADN 9R512: Commissaire de police de Condé [...], to the Sous-Préfet à Valenciennes, 28th November 1918.

¹⁵⁶ ADHS 4M513: report n°916, 8th March 1917, summary of interviews of 461 people from Lille.

¹⁵⁷ Taylor, ‘Black Market,’ p.157, 172-3.

¹⁵⁸ Heusghem, *Jeunesse*, p.31-2.

¹⁵⁹ Debarge, ‘Fourmies,’ p.95.

¹⁶⁰ AMT H4A27: typed document, mayor of Tourcoing, 30th March 1917.

¹⁶¹ See Rousseaux and Ypersele, *Patrie*, p.24-8; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.123-4. The investigating French authorities also believed this: ADHS 4M513: report n°1054, 19th March 1917 (Tournai).

the youngest was a nine year-old girl shot by a sentry.¹⁶² Often the role of smuggling is explicit, such as the case of a 48 year-old woman from Roubaix killed when attempting to cross the border with a sack of potatoes on 23rd August 1916.¹⁶³

Other preventative measures existed. In summer 1916, in Roubaix it was forbidden to remain by the border or outside houses located on the border, even for the inhabitants¹⁶⁴ – people were punished for this.¹⁶⁵ In Tourcoing in April 1918, the Germans attempted to turn the population against *ravitailleurs/fonceurs* in a poster regarding the recent increase of *pâtisseries* made with goods acquired by cross-border smuggling. They noted: ‘ce ne sont que certaines personnes devenues riches par les bénéfices de guerre et par un commerce illicite, qui profitent de ces friandises, tandis que la grande majorité de la population en est privée.’¹⁶⁶ The food in question was confiscated, and henceforth a fine of 1,000 Marks and three months’ imprisonment became the punishment for making foodstuffs using fraudulently-acquired ingredients.¹⁶⁷

The French police also did not differentiate between ‘positive’ smuggling and the black market, unlike its Second World War counterpart.¹⁶⁸ Instead, pre-war attitudes towards fraud and smuggling continued, although French policemen were less heavy-handed. Those suspected of smuggling or possessing contraband were arrested and questioned,¹⁶⁹

¹⁶² ADN 9R766: Commissaire de Police of Wattrelos to Prefect, 29th January; 10th, 12th May, 30th May; 4th, 22nd June, 30th June; 8th, 12th, 14th, 24th, 26th, 28th, 29th July; 6th, 8th, 11th, 13th, 16th, 18th, 23rd August; 16th and 21st September; 11th October 1916.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 23rd August 1916.

¹⁶⁴ ADN 9R718: German poster, Roubaix, 15th August 1916.

¹⁶⁵ ADN 9R252: von Graevenitz to Anjubault, 29th April 1915.

¹⁶⁶ ADN 9R748: German poster, Tourcoing, 19th April 1918.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, ‘Black Market,’ p.172.

¹⁶⁹ AML 4H266: report, 23-4th June 1916; AML 4H267: report, 23rd-24th September and 7-8th October 1916; ADHS 4M513: report n°526, 18th January 1917, summary of interviews with 506 people from the Nord and the Somme.

sometimes revealing that they purchased goods from German soldiers.¹⁷⁰ It is unclear if further action was taken against such individuals.

Yet movement between the frontiers should not necessarily be viewed as an explicitly criminal act. The borderland between Belgium and France had been fluid for generations, thus *Nordistes* crossing the frontier may have simply been attempting to return home, or may not have regarded such a movement as implicitly criminal. However, once again it is hard to view a clear distinction between survival and criminality – borders, whether geographic, patriotic, or moral, remained blurred in the occupied Nord.

Making Money

False money attracted much attention. The occupation had restructured the local economy significantly, and the gold franc – either appropriated by or hidden from the Germans – was replaced by communal, municipal or regional *bons*.¹⁷¹ This local money existed in tandem with German Marks. Despite restrictions on movement, financial transactions were possible across communal boundaries, especially via soldiers transferring money from one commune to another. This led to a complex situation in which numerous local currencies circulated in any given area. Such confusion opened the door to abuse, particularly falsifying *bons* from another locality from the one in which it was being used. Verification of these *bons* was made difficult by travel and communication restrictions. The *bons* themselves were easily manufactured. The legitimacy of *bons* could only be verified by the signature of the mayor of the commune from which the money was issued, a mayoral stamp, and the relevant number located on the money. Thus to falsify money, a basic printing press and an ability to forge the mayor's signature was required.

¹⁷⁰ AML 4H267: 20-1st August 1916.

¹⁷¹ Gromaire, *L'Occupation allemande*, p.174-81; Wallart, *Nord*, p.36-7.

The falsification of *bons* was widespread, as evidenced by lists of valid and invalid *bons* presented by Germans to French municipalities to combat fraud.¹⁷² These documents also demonstrate the number of local currencies: one poster contained no fewer than 67 separate, legitimate *bons* for the Nord, Somme and Pas-de-Calais.¹⁷³ These lists were issued at the demand of mayors, such as the mayor of Lille.¹⁷⁴ From 1916, cases of *occupés* arrested for the manufacture and distribution of false money increased.¹⁷⁵ By early 1917, the mayor of Lille informed the *Kommandant* that ‘Tous les jours, nos caissiers reçoivent des billets faux et le seul moyen d’éviter toutes ces pertes est de prescrire aux petites communes de retirer immédiatement les bons qu’elles ont émis.’¹⁷⁶ So widespread was the problem that it affected the French administration, such as in November 1917 when the *Recette Municipale de Lille* made a payment to the Germans, accidentally containing three false notes.¹⁷⁷

In many cases, the counterfeiters could not be discovered. The police of Tourcoing encountered this impasse frequently between 1917 and the end of the occupation, when falsification was particularly acute. 116 falsified *billets* were seized between April 1917 and February 1918,¹⁷⁸ and at least 38 *procès-verbaux* regarding falsified money took place from December 1917 to February 1918. Unsurprisingly, nearly everyone found in possession of false money denied having created it or implicitly did so by giving a detailed explanation of how they came to be in possession of it.¹⁷⁹ The investigating police officers usually believed such stories – reports contain key phrases concerning the

¹⁷² See, for example, AML 4H143: German poster, Cysoing, 25th March 1917.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, Liste des bons d’émission approuvés par l’Autorité allemande, n.d, n.p.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, mayor to Kommandant, 30th August 1916.

¹⁷⁵ ADN 9R515: Commissaire de Police of Roubaix to Prefect, 9th March 1916; ADN 9R582: Ville de Lille, Commissariat Central de Police, report, ‘crimes, délits, événements,’ 4-6th August 1916.

¹⁷⁶ AML 4H143: mayor to Kommandant, 7th March 1917.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Von Rauch (‘pour le Gouverneur en congé’) to mayor of Lille, 2nd November 1917.

¹⁷⁸ AMT H4A25: mayor to Procureur de la République, 18th May 1918.

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, *ibid.*, Ville de Tourcoing, Commissariat de Police, 3^e arrondissement, Procès-verbal n°252, 12th December 1917.

respectability of interviewees, such as being ‘bien considéré,’¹⁸⁰ ‘honorablement connu’ or possessing ‘bonne foi.’¹⁸¹ The notion of respectability once again comes to the fore: these were respectable people who were not betraying the national and local community in the same way as those engaging in other forms of *mauvaise conduite*.

Yet most discoveries of false money in Tourcoing were made at CANF depots and centres,¹⁸² again raising the possibility of some *occupés* undermining the relief effort in a reconfigured moral economy. However, it could simply be the case that CANF buildings were under increased scrutiny and surveillance, meaning false documents were more likely to be discovered here.

Both the German and French authorities put considerable effort into combating this perennial thorn in their side. Sometimes Germans were suspected of trading in falsified money,¹⁸³ but *occupés* were the main perpetrators. Falsifiers of money were listed in the *Bulletin* or posters,¹⁸⁴ in French police reports,¹⁸⁵ and in letters between German and French authorities.¹⁸⁶ Just like other types of fraud, falsification of money was perceived by Germans and French alike as a disrespectful act leading to negative consequences for all those in the occupied area.

Speculation and War Profiteering

Money could be made in other ways. Although not technically a crime, war profiteering, often confused with speculation, was perceived in a negative light. The *Commissaire*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Ville de Tourcoing, Commissariat de Police, 1^{er} arrondissement, Procès-verbal n°1317, 27th January 1918.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Ville de Tourcoing, Commissariat de Police, 3^e arrondissement, Procès-verbal n°86, 11th February 1918.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ AML 4H143: mayor to Kommandant, 27th June 1917.

¹⁸⁴ ADN 9R582: German posters, Roubaix, 29th August 1918; *BdL*, n°162 (1st June 1916) and n°151 (23rd April 1916).

¹⁸⁵ AML 4H266, AML 4H143, AMT 4HA 25, or ADN 9R730: Commissaire Central de Roubaix to Anjubault, 15th October 1915.

¹⁸⁶ AML 4H143: Staelin (of the Kommandantur) to mayor, 10th October 1918.

spéciale at Évian himself bought into such a worldview, noting in the summary of an interview with a man from Douai in April 1917 that some ‘commerçants sans scrupules’ were ‘en possession de sommes considérables, gagnées au dépend de leurs malheureux compatriotes’ by reselling essential goods at scandalous prices. Yet ‘On constate au contraire que des familles de grands industriels, très connus, reviennent avec des sommes peu élevées.’¹⁸⁷

A woman from Roubaix had remarked that:

Le gros commerce profite de la situation et en abuse; les négociants gardent des conserves (thon, sardines, etc) qu’ils avaient achetées avant la guerre, et ne les revendent que lorsque ces denrées ont atteint des prix exorbitants. Les habitants souffrent naturellement de ce manque de patriotisme provoqué par l’appât du gain.¹⁸⁸

Similar testimony emanated from St-Amand-les-Eaux.¹⁸⁹ Such a worldview existed elsewhere, but in the occupied area it showed the slippage between *mauvaise conduite* and *mauvaise conduite criminelle*. Morally dubious, often criminal acts were perceived to be commonplace. This perception itself bred a new facet of the *culture de l’occupé*.

Fears for the Present and the Future

Concerns about increased criminality, especially among the young, extended beyond the police. The *Bulletin* of 16th June 1916 noted that: ‘La longue inaction que nous subissons est funeste aux gamins (et aussi aux propriétaires),’ before detailing the theft of vegetables from a policeman’s garden committed by an 11 year-old.¹⁹⁰ Other *occupés* agreed that the period of mass unemployment combined with the general effects of the occupation to erode the work ethic and morals of the population. The occupation was

¹⁸⁷ ADHS 4M513: report n°1268, 28th April 1917.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, report n°1211, 25th April 1917.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, report n°1179, 23rd April 1917, summary of interviews with 472 people from St-Amand-les-Eaux. The quotation itself is a summary of the statement of M. Bottiau, *préposé principal des Contributions indirectes*.

¹⁹⁰ *BdL*, n°166 (16th June 1916).

an affront to respectability – and *mauvaise conduite*, criminal or otherwise, was the most visible form of this.

Rouesel wrote extensively on the perceived threat of crime, in the present and the future. He wrote that ‘on oublie’ that numerous thefts and pillages took place in Roubaix and its environs, mainly at night. Animals were stolen from fields, material from factories, and some people even broke into inhabited houses, armed with revolvers. Among the ‘rars arrestations’ that took place, ‘il se trouvait beaucoup de tout jeunes gens, même provenant de familles honorables, qui ne seraient jamais devenus cambrioleurs s’ils n’avaient commencé par foncer à la frontière.’¹⁹¹ He concludes:

Voici ce qu’il est bon de se dire et de répéter, car si une réaction sévère ne se produit pas aussitôt après la la guerre [sic ...] nous serons exposés à avoir une génération composée en partie d’apaches pour succéder aux braves et honnêtes ouvriers roubaisiens que nous avons connu [sic] jusqu’ici.¹⁹²

This criminal misconduct was exemplary of a wider disrespect for the government. He believed that this should be corrected in schools, where children should learn that they owe not just a blood debt to the *Patrie*, but a civic debt to the government.¹⁹³

The real situation was not as monochrome in its moral shades, as the diary of Blin demonstrates. Writing in response to the negative treatment of *occupés* by non-occupied French, he admitted that ‘Sans doute, nous ne sommes pas sans reproches [...] Une jeunesse irréfléchie & bruyante, heureuse de vivre dans une molle oisiveté s’est trop souvent fait remarquer par son manque de cœur & son absence de sens moral.’ However, after mentioning ‘mercantis’ and women nicknamed ‘la viande aux soldats,’ he maintains that ‘la population reste, dans sa grande majorité, digne de la France, digne des enfants qu’elle a envoyés au-devant l’ennemi pour sauvegarder l’honneur & l’intégrité de

¹⁹¹ ADN J1933: Rouesel manuscript, ‘Les fraudes, les vols et cambriolages [16/12/1916],’ p.3-4.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, ‘La fraude après la guerre,’ dated 23rd March 1917.

la Patrie!¹⁹⁴ In this rebuttal of the tarnishing of the occupied population as unpatriotic and too friendly with the Germans, Blin also demonstrates the ways in which this was to some extent true. Most importantly, he highlights the popular belief that the occupation was teaching the young inhabitants nothing but laziness and crime. This concern reappeared a few months later:

Assassinat rue de l'Epeule; un adolescent égorge une mère et sa fillette. La guerre prépare, dans nos régimes, une triste génération. La distinction entre "le mien & le tien" ne se fait plus: la conscience est étouffée par la lutte pour la vie. Que de voyous en herbe! l'oisiveté [sic] fait éclore tous les vices: maxime bien vraie et d'un réalisme malheureusement tangible en ce moment.¹⁹⁵

Early 1917 seems to have been the point from which this problem attracted more attention. In May, the *Commissaire Central* of Lille informed the acting *Préfet* of what he labelled 'un danger social certain, une menace pour le bon renom et la prospérité de l'école laïque.' Since the occupation:

le nombre des adolescents déferés au Parquet pour vols de toutes natures devient inquiétant. Au début, la majorité des délinquants était fournie par des jeunes gens ayant dépassé l'âge scolaire et se trouvant, par suite des circonstances, livrés à l'oisiveté forcée.

A l'heure actuelle, les écoliers réunis souvent en bande commettant fréquemment des vols qualifiés avec une dextérité que n'acquièrent pas toujours les véritables professionnels.¹⁹⁶

He provides examples of recent arrests of such 'bandes,' before noting that there were numerous isolated cases, not to mention those who had not been caught or identified by the police. He concluded: 'Il existe donc un véritable danger de propagation que le personnel enseignant pourrait peut-être essayer d'enrayer dans la mesure de ses moyens.'¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 11th February 1918.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16th April 1918.

¹⁹⁶ ADN 9R580: Commissaire Central de Lille to Prefect 8th May 1917.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

In April 1917, *député du Nord* Henri Ghesquière wrote a letter to the mayor of Lille: 'Je me fais un devoir de vous signaler les actes de vandalisme que l'on peut relever dans tout Lille, mais que je constate dans le quartier que j'habite avec une inquiétude pénible.'¹⁹⁸ After describing how children in his *quartier* were destroying urinals and trees, he concluded: 'Que penser sur ce que deviendront ces enfants quand on voudra les sortir des milieux d'oisiveté et de vice où ils auront contracté les habitudes de vol, de mendicité, de pillage et de saccage dont ils s'accoutument? On n'ose y penser!'¹⁹⁹ He asked if police, educational, or labour measures could be taken to fix this problem, and seemed to end on a threat: 'Je vous soumets [...] ces bien tristes réflexions en espérant qu'elles pourront provoquer quelques mesures utiles, ne serait-ce pour donner l'impression que l'autorité française n'a pas du tout abandonné ses droits.'²⁰⁰

Later that month, the *Commissaire Central* agreed with Ghesquière, but argued that it was not his responsibility 'rechercher les voies et moyens à employer pour conjurer le mal qui constituera, il faut le reconnaître, un véritable danger social, d'autant plus grand que les mauvaises habitudes résultant de l'oisiveté auront contaminé d'autres éléments que ceux de la jeune génération.'²⁰¹ Fears of idleness, although often inextricably linked to vagabondage and child criminality, are here seen as separate from the latter. Either way, a concern for the occupation's effect on the moral well-being of the youth is evident.

The Germans were not immune from this fear and acknowledged the problems youth crime posed for them. Von Graevenitz wrote to the mayor of Lille in May 1917, stating that recently 'gamins' had caused 'dégâts importants' to railway lines, by pulling apart fences and walls. Only some perpetrators had been arrested but, as they were minors, their parents were punished with 'détention' for 'manque de surveillance.'

¹⁹⁸ AML 4H222: HENRI GHESQUIERE to mayor, 15th April 1917.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Commissaire Central of Lille to mayor, 23rd April 1917.

Partout [...] on remarque un nombre insolite de gamins oisifs qui rôdent et profitent de toutes les occasions pour mal faire. Ces bandes d'effrontés volent systématiquement tout ce qui se trouve sur les véhicules militaires ceux de la poste [sic], du ravitaillement ou de fourrages; importunent les militaires et les soldats de garde, leur jettent des pierres, etc.²⁰²

The damage to railway lines was understood by the Germans as sabotage, rendering such actions dangerous for the perpetrators, the town and the population as a whole. Von Graevenitz held the town responsible and ordered the mayor 'réagir énergiquement contre le dévergondage croissant de cette Jeunesse, par des mesures appropriées (occupation imposée dans les écoles, organisation d'exercices de gymnastique, sous la surveillance des maîtres; occupation forcée dans les services publiques, etc).'²⁰³

The *Commissaire Central* believed that the facts represented more of a danger for French society, 'et ce n'est pas sans appréhension que l'ont peut envisager l'avenir en présence du résultat qu'ont déjà donné jusqu'ici l'oisiveté des uns et l'inconduite des autres.'²⁰⁴ He reminded the mayor that, for more than a year, he had ordered his men to intervene upon seeing wayward youths whenever possible. They were then to take them home, getting the parents to promise to send them to school or at least maintain surveillance over them. Yet, he argues:

Ce moyen a pu réussir quelquefois, mais la plupart du temps, c'est un coup d'épée dans l'eau. L'autorité familiale n'existe plus dans beaucoup de ménages par suite du départ du père, de la faiblesse de la mère et chose plus amère à constater, souvent par l'inconduite de celle-ci. Dans ce dernier cas, la présence régulière de l'enfant à la maison constitue une gêne pour la mère et alors elle ne fait aucun reproche sur les absences prolongées et répétées; l'enfant jouit d'une liberté autant plus grande qu'il la sent encouragée. Il a vite fait des prosélytes et une bande est constituée.²⁰⁵

²⁰² *Ibid.*, von Graevenitz to mayor, 10th May 1917.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Commissaire Central of Lille to mayor, 16th May 1917.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The *Commissaire* continued by highlighting recent police measures – including procuring the names of 90 ‘vagabonds’ – and proposing further ideas.²⁰⁶ However, the *Inspecteur Générale de l’Enseignement technique* had a different perspective: the ‘oisiveté’ of numerous children was because the majority of young people were not able to attend their courses as they could not travel to and from class without a pass, which the Germans would not provide.²⁰⁷ Whatever the case, ‘le nombre des vagabonds des deux sexes augmente.’²⁰⁸ This was not just a case of young men or boys engaging in criminal and unrespectable acts, but also young girls and women – although the latter also had links to sexual *mauvaise conduite*, as demonstrated. They were assumed to be adult in terms of their sexual choices but, like boys, required further control in the wider, moral sphere.

Youth ‘vagabondage’ and delinquency also comprised general destructiveness, as occurred in Tourcoing, where children used makeshift slingshots to damage street lights.²⁰⁹ The police were ordered to combat this, and increased surveillance near schools.²¹⁰ These actions constituted not only a moral and social danger for the occupied region, but potentially a patriotic danger. Even youth criminality could cross the ill-defined bridge to full-blown *mauvaise conduite*. For instance, in Lille in April 1918, ‘jeunes gens’ knocked on inhabitants’ doors or threw stones at their windows. When the inhabitants reprimanded them, the latter were ‘injurées grossièrement.’ More seriously, ‘ils font avec l’armée occupante le logement,’ indicating to the Germans that a house was empty when the inhabitant was merely momentarily absent. The youths told the Germans to break the door, which they saw as a ‘farce.’ The investigating policeman noted: ‘Les parents de ces jeunes gens sont bien considérés mais pas assez énergiques, car à plusieurs reprises je

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Inspecteur Générale de l’Enseignement technique to mayor, 20th May 1917.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 16th May 1917.

²⁰⁹ AMT H4A28: letter (n.a.) to Commissaire Central, ‘début de novembre’ 1915.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, mayor to ‘Monsieur le Directeur,’ 11th November 1915.

leur ai signalé leurs mauvaises conduites.²¹¹ There was thus a blurring of criminality and *mauvaise conduite* among youths, as elsewhere. An anonymous denunciation of ‘un groupe reunis [sic]’ sent to the mayor of Lille in June 1918 reinforced this: it was noted that the fifteen-year-old son of a neighbour engaged in trade with the Germans rather than work, and encouraged other boys to do the same.²¹²

Thus youth criminality and delinquency posed a major problem for the local French authorities, who believed the two to be linked. There are a few indicators of the reality, such as the lists drawn up by the police of children found ‘vagabondant’ during school hours and subsequently taken to police stations. Only incomplete lists for 1917 remain, focusing on just a few arrondissements of Lille. Nevertheless, they indicate 427 children of both sexes ‘arrested’ at least once from January to May 1917 alone.²¹³ This explains the large number of measures taken to curb this problem. By February 1918, a massive operation was underway. The aim was surveillance, splitting the entire population of Lille’s 3,616 adolescents aged 14 to 17 into groups of 30, and charging members of a newly created ‘commission centrale de la répression du vagabondage’²¹⁴ with monitoring their activities – one member per group. They were particularly concerned with acts of vagabondage, and had to indicate when intervention was required. Members of the committee were drawn from notables and other respectable individuals.²¹⁵

²¹¹ AML 4H222: handwritten report, Walter, 24th April 1918.

²¹² *Ibid.*, handwritten denunciation, n.a., 19th June 1918.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, ‘enfants et adolescents trouvés errant sur la voie publique,’ stamped 31st May 1917; 4⁸^{ème} arrondissements, ‘Liste des enfants trouvés vagabondant pendant les heures de classe et conduits par les agents au poste de police pendant l’année 1917.’

²¹⁴ AML 4H224: arrêté of mayor, 6th and 10th April 1918. It was also known as the ‘Comité central de la surveillance de la jeunesse.’

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* There were initially 146 members, including lawyers, doctors, teachers, accountants, industrialists and landlords. See also most of AML 4H224, especially mayor to M. Ghesquière, 27th February and 9th April 1918.

On 6th June 1918, the *recteur* of the *Université de Lille*²¹⁶ congratulated the mayor for the commission's work and the implementation of what he perceived to be liberal policies from which French society could benefit, even after the war. He ended by noting that 'la jeunesse française dont l'héroïsme et l'abnégation font l'admiration du monde entier, devra être préservée à tout prix du double fléau qui aurait vite faite d'anéantir en leurs germes les plus belles vertus: la paresse et l'inconduite.'²¹⁷ These charitable works represent a form of unity within the wider disunity of criminality, delinquency, and *mauvaise conduite*. Indeed, the mayor himself mentioned the unity of cause in his opening address to the first reunion of the commission on 18th April 1918:

Des hommes sont venus à nous de tous les horizons politiques, de toutes les classes sociales, réalisant une fois plus l'union sainte. Une même pensée nous animera tous, celle de maintenir la population dans un étiage morale qui lui permettra de réparer, dans la mesure du possible, des ruines, et de panser ces blessures.²¹⁸

This was met with rapturous applause from the members of the commission, further proof of respectable society's concern with youth misbehaviour.

Criminality in Context

The problem of criminality during the occupation highlights yet further avenues of action open to the occupied population. Criminality was a sub-set of *mauvaise conduite*, arguably the most frequent form; it was a struggle for survival, but one which often came at the expense of compatriots. Such was the scale of criminality that local notables feared for the future of local French youth. However, the potentially selfish, unrespectable, and unpatriotic actions studied so far were not the only responses to the occupation. Just as in the Second World War, the occupied Nord of 1914-18 saw choices made on both side of the moral-patriotic spectrum. Many memoirs, histories, and other works on this

²¹⁶ See François-Xavier Boone, 'La guerre de Georges Lyon: l'occupation de Lille par les Allemands (août 1914-octobre 1918),' mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction d'Annette Becker (Lille III, 1997).

²¹⁷ AML 4H224: Georges Lyon to mayor, 6th June 1918.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 'Répression du Vagabondage, Réunion Constitutive de l'Œuvre,' 18th April [seemingly 1918].

occupation have highlighted the unity and resistance of the local population faced with the occupier. Part I has demonstrated that complete unity was never more than a myth. Part II will now demonstrate, on the other hand, that certain *occupés* did respond to the occupier with resistance – and this resistance was itself firmly rooted in the *culture de l'occupé*.

Part II: Popular Patriotism and Resistance *avant la majuscule*

The occupied Nord was not filled exclusively with cases of *mauvaise conduite* and crime. The spectrum of possible activity, whilst limited, still allowed for moral-patriotic choices. Indeed, precisely because actions were limited, the consequences of every decision were exemplified and exaggerated. Those engaging in *mauvaise conduite* were placed on one side of the spectrum; ‘patriots’ and those opposing the occupier on the other. Criminals existed in a borderland, although were usually associated with *mauvaise conduite*. Most interwar texts dealing with the occupation, and even some recent histories, perceive the *occupés* as ceaselessly patriotic and opposing the Germans as much as possible.¹ Becker, for example, notes that the Germans were shocked by ‘la résistance compacte, massive, de la population à l’occupation.’² This non-capitalised ‘resistance’ will be studied in this part of the thesis. This is neither the Resistance nor the ‘resistances’ of the Second World War – opposition here was rarely organised, never armed, and faced its own constraints and unique circumstances.

Three main categories of resistance are proposed: respectable resistance, symbolic or ‘performative’ opposition, and active resistance. The following chapters explore each of these. I will provide tentative conclusions about the nature, extent and effect of such actions. By reconfiguring resistance, as collaboration has been remoulded into *mauvaise conduite*, my aim is to explain modes of conduct that were both *between* and *beyond* the concepts of collaboration and resistance as understood for the Second World War.³ Taylor has criticised the focus in Second-World-War historiography on ‘occupation

¹ See, for example, Redier, *Allemands*; Paul Bardou, *Eugène Jacquet et ses Amis: Histoire de Quatre Fusillés de Lille par un témoin* (Lille, 1919); de Forge and Mauclère, *Feuilles*; Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*; Whitaker, *Under the Heel*. For recent histories, see Becker, *Cicatrices*; Auriol, *Ténèbres*; Debarge, ‘Fourmies occupée,’ p.306; Vandenbussche, ‘Le pouvoir municipal,’ p.459; Wallart, *Nord*, p.45; Cottel, *Walters*, p.19.

² Becker, *Oubliés*, p.39-40.

³ Taylor, *Between*.

polities,' the concentration on the extremes of resistance and collaboration⁴ – but here such a focus allows for a move towards a comprehensive study of occupied life from 1914 to 1918. Indeed, the thread of respectability running throughout both the 'dark' and 'light' sides of the occupation weaves a convincing *tableau* of an occupied *culture de guerre*.

The term 'resistance' has been interpreted and utilised in a variety of different ways by historians, sociologists, and anthropologists – among others. Even for scholars of Nazi-occupied Europe, who deal with the topic in depth, there is no consensus on the definition and limits of resistance.⁵ The contested meaning of this analytical concept has been examined,⁶ but the intricacies of the debate are not engaged with here, despite (and partly because of) arguments against definitions so all-encompassing that the term becomes meaningless.⁷ In the following chapters I will seek to provide an explanation for the use of the term 'resistance' to describe the phenomena studied. Further, historians working on occupied France or Belgium in the First World War often label certain actions as resistance without the need for much (or any) analytical or theoretical

⁴ Taylor, 'Black Market,' p.155.

⁵ Pierre Laborie, 'L'idée de Résistance, entre définition et sens: retour sur un questionnement,' in *Les Cahiers de l'Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, Cahier N°37: La Résistance et les Français: Nouvelles approches* (Paris, December 1997), p.15 and 17. See also: Pierre Laborie, 'Qu'est-ce que la Résistance?', François Marcot, 'Les résistances dans leurs temps,' and Claire Andrieu, 'Les résistances dans les siècles,' in François Marcot, Bruno Leroux and Christine Levisse-Touzé (eds.), *Dictionnaire historique de la Résistance* (Paris, 2006), pp.29-38, 38-46 and 46-54, respectively.

⁶ See Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing Resistance,' *Sociological Forum*, 19: 4 (December 2004), p.534; James C. Scott, 'Resistance without Protest and without Organization: Peasant Opposition to the Islamic *Zakat* and the Christian Tithe,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29: 3 (July 1987), p.419; Chad Bryant, 'The Language of Resistance? Czech Jokes and Joke-Telling under Nazi Occupation, 1943-45,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:1 (January, 2006), pp.133-151; H. Roderick Kedward, 'La résistance, l'histoire et l'anthropologie: quelques domaines de la théorie' (trans. Yves Le Juen), in Jean-Marie Guillon and Pierre Laborie (eds.), *Mémoire et Histoire: la Résistance* (Toulouse, 1995); M. R. D. Foot, *Resistance: An Analysis of European Resistance to Nazism, 1940-1945* (London, 1976); Michael Greyer and John W. Boyer (eds.), *Resistance Against the Third Reich, 1933-1990* (Chicago, 1992); David Clay Large (ed.), *Contending with Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1991).

⁷ Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.387.

justification.⁸ Such is the consensus in the historical community that the January 2010 biannual conference of the the *Musée de la Résistance* of Bondues focused for the first time on resistance in occupied France and Belgium during the First World War, rather than the Second. In this sense, it is one of the most studied and documented phenomena of occupied life.

Armed Resistance Explained Away

To explain why there was no armed resistance to the Germans during the occupation, we must return to late-summer 1914. Soon after war was declared and it became apparent that the Germans were launching an invasion via the north, local French authorities forbade armed resistance on the part of the civilian population. The mayor of Roubaix, for example, offered advice to the population in the event of the Germans arriving:

Ne commettez aucun acte qui pourrait servir de prétexte à des représailles terribles.

Si jamais un individu se livrait à un acte contre un soldat allemand, dans les circonstances présentes ce serait une folie criminelle. Un fait de ce genre ne pourrait être que l'œuvre d'un agent provocateur.

Cela ne se produira pas à Roubaix.

*Nous comptons absolument que la population roubaisienne donnera un bel exemple de calme et conservera tout son sang-froid.*⁹

Similar advice was proffered in Belgium.¹⁰ This proclamation echoes the reticence of many rural communes to encourage non-military armed resistance during the Franco-Prussian war,¹¹ linked to what has been dubbed the 'légende noire' of peasant behaviour in 1870.¹² Indeed, what applied to many mayors in 1870 also applied in 1914: their first reflex was to disarm their *administrés* to ensure that they were not tempted to use such

⁸ See, for example, Emmanuel Debruyne and Jehanne Paternostre, *La Résistance au Quotidien, 1914-1918: Témoignages inédits* (Brussels, 2009), p.16-17; de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.122-3, 231; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.15-17, 257-8; Proctor, *Civilians*, pp.135-41; Nivet, 'Femmes,' p.292; Nivet, *France*, pp.207-65.

⁹ Poster, Maire de Roubaix, on display at the Historial de la Grande Guerre, n.d. Original emphasis.

¹⁰ Annie Deperchin and Laurence van Ypersele, 'Droit et occupation: le cas de la France et de la Belgique,' in John Horne (ed.), *Vers la guerre totale: le tournant de 1914-1915* (Paris, 2010), p.164.

¹¹ Audoin-Rouzeau, *1870*, p.132-3, 211-12.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.212.

weapons, and to show goodwill towards the invader.¹³ Across the Nord, especially in Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing, the population was asked to deposit all weapons at designated municipal buildings. Such a policy, intended to reduce armed conflict with the Germans, occasionally later led to different conflict, such as the German discovery of the weapons depot in Tourcoing's *hôtel de ville* in 1916.¹⁴

Once the Germans arrived, they demanded that the population deposit remaining weapons at the *Kommandantur*.¹⁵ For local notables such Rouesel, this policy was acceptable because 'les civils ne devant prendre aucune part aux hostilités, les armes pouvaient être un danger pour la sécurité des troupes et en les supprimant, l'autorité allemande évitait un conflit possible qui eût pu causer un incident dangereux pour la population.'¹⁶

Naturally, not everyone complied.¹⁷ As such, the Germans searched for and requisitioned weaponry throughout the occupation.¹⁸ Pained by the idea of providing weapons for the enemy, Blin wrote: 'Adieu! Armes plus ou moins blanches, fusils, revolvers etc.. [sic] En route pour l'All. [sic].' Yet handing in weapons was for many a logical, if difficult, decision. An *occupé* caught possessing a weapon faced the death penalty,¹⁹ although in actuality imprisonment and forced labour were the most frequent sentences.²⁰

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.210.

¹⁴ ADN 9R753: 'Plaidoyer de Monsieur SPÉDER en faveur des inculpés: MM/RICH, DESTOMBES, DUMORTIER, DESCAMPS, et DRUEZ,' n.d.

¹⁵ AMT H4A26: German poster, Tourcoing, 20th October 1914, article III.

¹⁶ ADN J1933: Rouesel manuscript, 'Les réquisitions d'armes, de [sic] bicyclettes et d'automobiles,' p.7.

¹⁷ For example, ADN 9R556: Extrait des Procès-verbaux de la Commandanture de Lille, 8th November 1914. The mayor of Noyelles-lez-Seclin was found in possession of a revolver on the final date for handing in weapons.

¹⁸ ADN 9R516: German poster, Lambersart, 5th May 1917.

¹⁹ ADN 9R717: German poster, Général Commandant l'Armée, 25th November 1915, article III; ADN 9R719: German poster, Roubaix, 30th June 1917. Léopold Moulard was executed for possessing a revolver and munitions.

²⁰ See, for example, ADN 9R716: German poster, Roubaix, 21st July 1915. Guillaume Alphonse Delannoy was sentenced to five years' forced labour for possessing a revolver and munitions; German

Whether requisitioned by force or voluntarily handed in, weapons were therefore hard to come by and dangerous to own in occupied France. Also, the concentration of Germans made armed resistance seem futile and suicidal. Troop numbers were higher in larger localities, particularly those with vital railway links or near the front, such as Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing, Cambrai or Valenciennes. To give an idea of the scale of the German presence, from June to August 1915 a total of 169,191 Germans used Tourcoing's tramway alone;²¹ from September to November 1915, the total was 194,328.²² Not all formed part of the army of occupation, but such a distinction was probably unimportant to the *occupés*. The presence of tens of thousands of armed Germans, the difficulty in acquiring weapons, and severe restrictions on liberty of movement and communication undermined the feasibility of armed resistance. Further, the weakened physical state in which the population found itself may have discouraged opposition. A photo taken in June 1917 shows forced labourer Jules Claeys, weighing just 38kg after three months' forced labour (see Fig. 6). It should be noted, however, that Claeys had in fact engaged in a different form of resistance by refusing to work in the first place, and then once forced into a labour battalion, refusing to work on railways, for which he was tortured.²³ Yet many other sources attest to the poor physiological and psychological state in which most *occupés* found themselves,²⁴ which would have discouraged more overt acts of resistance.

There were isolated incidents of civilian violence, such as the alleged shooting of German sentries (one of whom died) by two members of the occupied population in Roubaix in October 1917. One of the 'meurtriers' was shot and killed whilst trying to flee the

poster, Roubaix, 9th June 1915. Henry Hespel was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for possessing weapons.

²¹ AMT H4A32: director of the Compagnie des Tramways de Roubaix & de Tourcoing to mayor of Tourcoing, 3rd September 1915.

²² *Ibid.*, 11th October, 10th November and 7th December 1915.

²³ ADN 9R245: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 29th October 1917.

²⁴ See, for example, Trochon, *Lille*, pp.195-212; Nivet, 'Femmes,' p.278; Benoît, 'L'état sanitaire'; or ADN 9R1293: list of refugees and civilian prisoners who died during the occupation.

German police during a follow-up inquiry.²⁵ A handful of other examples of individual armed or violent resistance exist,²⁶ but they remain the exceptions that prove the rule. The occupied population did not engage in Werner Rings's 'Resistance Enchained,' mainly used in the context of Jewish ghetto revolts in World War II. This resistance comprised 'the desperate fight of those who were cut off, without help, and with practically no hope of surviving.'²⁷ The *occupés* were cut off, but although living conditions were bad, there *was* hope for survival; they were receiving help, both directly from the Allied aid organisations, and indirectly from the Allied armies' struggle against the Central Powers. Further, widespread civilian resistance usually occurs with the defeat of conventional forces,²⁸ when all hope of military victory is lost. From 1914 until 1918, the Allied armies fought the Central Powers militarily; it was not the role of *occupés* to do so. The nature of the war of attrition, in which huge armies made small gains at great loss, and the flat plains of the Nord (lacking mountainous or wooded terrain useful for guerrilla warfare) also detracted from the possibility of armed resistance. Despite being convinced by material conditions and patriotism that they lived at the military front,²⁹ the *occupés* remained above all civilians, not combatants.

However, the difficulty of engaging in armed resistance was not the only factor explaining its absence. The aforementioned decision of French municipalities to discourage resistance also played a role, and the factors influencing their decision can be applied to the population at large. Why was armed opposition discouraged? The answer is fear of reprisals, linked to the memory of the Franco-Prussian War and the invasion atrocities, and the importance of international law and respectability.

²⁵ ADN 9R732: Commissaire Central de Roubaix to Anjubault, 13th October 1917.

²⁶ See, for example, AN F23/375: 'Département du Nord, Récompense Honorifique, Proposition en faveur de M. Debiève [sic] Arthur, Commegnies, rue de Sarlonton,' 28th May 1923.

²⁷ Marrus, 'Jewish Resistance,' p.103.

²⁸ John Horne and Alan Kramer, 'War Between Soldiers and Enemy Civilians, 1914-1915,' in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2000), p.167.

²⁹ Smith et al., *France*, p.44; Leman, *Pages actuelles*, p.92.

The French authorities wanted to avoid bloodthirsty and costly urban warfare involving civilians, which could even lead to social disorder – the memory of the Paris Commune would have been strong in the Catholic Nord, although few occupation documents reference this period. Authorities did not wish to give the Germans any pretext for reprisals, as happened in the Franco-Prussian war after *franc-tireur* attacks on the Prussians.³⁰ Despite this, but precisely because of commonplace *franc-tireur* attacks in 1870-1,³¹ the Germans saw *francs-tireurs* everywhere during the invasion and responded in kind. Emmanuel Debruyne argues that atrocities played a major role in the discouragement of armed resistance among the population of the invaded and later occupied regions.³²

Isabel Hull has also emphasised the foundational role of 1870-1 for the German military,³³ and demonstrates its institutionalised violence of the pre-war campaign against the Herero. Here, the Germans used tactics such as concentration camps, deportations and atrocities to force civil obedience,³⁴ with much success. Similar tactics were employed during the invasion and occupation of northern France, thus for Hull this occupation shared with the occupations of the Eastern Front (traditionally seen as more severe)³⁵ an extremely ‘important factor in determining the spiral of extremity: untrammelled military power.’³⁶ This persuaded local notables and the wider population of the foolishness of resistance.

Another key reason for French authorities discouraging civilian armed action was their desire not to breach the 1907 Hague Convention, which forbade such activities unless

³⁰ Audoin-Rouzeau, *1870*, p.262.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136-7, 214.

³² Debruyne, ‘Resistance: the prequel,’ p.3. Paper given at the International Society for the Study of the First World War 2009 conference, e-mailed to the author.

³³ Hull, *Absolute*, p.109, 117.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73, 79, 211.

³⁵ See, for example, Liulevicius, *War Land*.

³⁶ Hull, *Absolute*, p.248.

the population was organised into clearly identifiable, armband-wearing groups.³⁷ These resistance units would be crushed by the Germans, and also ran contrary to the French government's abandonment of the invaded regions, whereby even fortress cities like Lille were declared 'villes ouvertes'.³⁸ Guerilla resistance, breaching the Hague Convention, would give the Germans a legitimate pretext for reprisals, 'to prove the enemy right.'³⁹ It would also show a lack of respect for the law, and if anything distinguishes this occupation and particularly the resistance that took place, it is a devotion to, almost adulation of, the law, and the importance of general bourgeois respectability. Naturally, international law was also crucial to the Allied governments' understanding of the war.⁴⁰ I now examine invocations of the law and other forms of 'respectable resistance.'

³⁷ Annexe to the Hague Convention, section III, article 1.

³⁸ Trenard and Hilaire, *Lille*, p.183.

³⁹ Debruyne, 'Resistance: the prequel,' p.3.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Nicoletta F. Gullace, 'Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War,' *The American Historical Review*, 102:3 (June 1997), pp.714-747; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Germany's Violations of the Laws of War, 1914-15: Compiled under the auspices of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (London, 1915; originally Paris, 1915), (trans.) J.O.P. Bland; Basdevant, *Déportations*.

Chapter I – Notable Protests: Respectable Resistance (*Coups de gueule polis*)

Throughout the occupation, French notables protested against German demands and policy. Such behaviour was commonplace across occupied France and Belgium,¹ not just in the Nord. Studying such resistance at first appears rather unadventurous, as for many writers it is a proven fact.² Yet the form, style and content of these protests provide an insight into the *culture de l'occupé*, and reinforce the importance of respectability. This worldview and its concomitant behaviour, although not exclusively *Nordiste* or even uniquely French, were nevertheless deeply rooted in the Third Republic. The 'bourgeois Republic' is often perceived as a 'République des avocats',³ built on notions of notability and with its own norms for public discourse which defined what was respectable – although not always involving polite discussion. Yet when the limits of acceptability were breached or an affront to honour occurred, it was common for politicians to resolve matters by a duel.⁴ Notable protests, in some sense verbal-textual duels, therefore represent French, bourgeois, Third Republic-inspired resistance *par excellence*.

¹ De Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.222-3; Emile Cammaerts, *Through the Iron Bars (Two Years of German Occupation in Belgium)* (London, 1917), p.32, 58, 61-3; Frédéric Dauphin, 'Le clergé paroissial en Belgique: la perception de l'occupation allemande,' *Revue du Nord*, 80: 325 (April-June 1998), p.378; Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.61; Fleury, *Sous la botte*, vol. I, p.47, 73, 221-2, 247; Becker, *Oubliés*, p.78-9; Blancpain, *Quand Guillaume*, p.45-6, 74.

² Cliquennois-Pâque, *Lille*, p.VIII; Jean-François Cardon, 'La gestion municipale à Cambrai pendant la Première Guerre mondiale,' mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de B. Ménager (Lille III, 1994); Carine Cnudde-Lecointre, 'Monseigneur Charost, évêque de Lille durant la Grande Guerre,' *Revue du Nord*, 80: 325 (April-June 1998), pp.355-366; Vandenbussche, 'Le pouvoir municipal'; Debarge, 'Fourmies occupée'; Annie Deperchin, 'Un établissement pénitentiaire pendant la Grande Guerre: Loos,' *Revue du Nord*, 80: 325 (April-June 1998), pp.337-354.

³ However, this term is contested. See Gilles Le Béguec, *La République des avocats* (Paris, 2003), especially pp.3-5; idem (ed.), *Avocats et Barreaux en France 1910-1930* (Nancy, 1994), pp.92-4. For the bourgeois Republic, see Jean-Pierre Azéma and Michel Winock, *La troisième république (1870-1940)* (Paris, 1976), pp.126-39; Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from its Origins to the Great War, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, 1984), (trans.) J. R. Foster, pp.341-2; Roger Magraw, *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century* (Cornwall, 1983), pp.225-254, 362-75.

⁴ Piers Paul Read, *The Dreyfus Affair: The Story of the Most Infamous Miscarriage of Justice in French History* (London, 2012), p.41.

An explanation of precisely what is meant by ‘notable’ is necessary. The mid-nineteenth century meaning comprised *haute/grande bourgeoisie* dynasties whose economic situation allowed them to rule politically, without taking a salary. With the introduction of professional, paid politicians under the Third Republic, the influence of the ‘original’ notables waned.⁵ By 1914, the concept had evolved to include Gambetta’s *couches nouvelles*: the middle classes of the *petite bourgeoisie*, *petite paysannerie*, landowners, members of the liberal professions, functionaries, and even industrialists. They formed the backbone of the Third Republic, as voters and politicians,⁶ and tended to have radical political leanings.⁷ Consequently, the contemporary use of ‘notable’ is rather ambiguous, encompassing those in positions of authority who were theoretically respected by their fellow countrymen and the Germans. This included members of the local French administration as well as bishops and industrialists. One occupation diarist writes of ‘notables’ as comprising ‘la haute société’ or ‘la tête de la population.’⁸

Occasionally it was the Germans who ‘designated’ people as notables,⁹ using them as middle-men responsible for the communication of German demands and the behaviour of the population. Other times the population itself categorised individuals as notables. For instance, municipal councils provided the Germans with a list of hostages – the most explicit demonstration of the notables’ role as guardians of the population.¹⁰ The hope was that the local population would respect the notables enough to avoid engaging in acts of resistance, for which the hostages could be killed, although killings were rare

⁵ Hamman, *Transformations*, pp.22-24.

⁶ Azéma and Winock, *La troisième république*, pp.126-45; Mayeur and Rebérioux, *Third Republic*, pp.5-41; Magraw, *Bourgeois Century*, pp.209-34; Hamman, *Transformations*, pp.22-24, 322-331.

⁷ Azéma and Winock, *La troisième république*, p.136.

⁸ ADN J1933: Rouesel manuscript, ‘Déportation en Allemagne de deux cents notables de la région occupée,’ p.1-2. For a guide to notables of the Lille métropole, see ADN 124J4: *Guide de la Vie Flamande: “Masques Lillois”* (Lille, July 1906).

⁹ See ADN 9R755: typewritten note, n.d., n.a., entitled ‘Quelques réflexions’; ADN 9R515: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 5th January 1918; ADN 9R1229: Procès-verbal, M. Lesquel, 16th January 1919; Jules Hélot, *Cinquante Mois sous le joug allemand. (L’occupation allemande à Cambrai et dans le Cambrésis)* (Paris, 1919), p.272.

¹⁰ See, for example, ADN 9R716: German poster, Roubaix, 29th October 1914; Wallart, *Nord*, p.41-3.

beyond the invasion period. Thus being a notable was not always beneficial during the occupation, even if it did have some advantages such as increased freedom of movement or better access to goods.¹¹ Despite the multifarious nature of notability, this chapter focuses on what might be called ‘municipal resistance’ or ‘administrative resistance’ in the context of the Second World War.¹² Such opposition has left many traces, and in its form and content constitutes a respectable form of resistance.

Social interactions between occupier and occupied followed a set of unwritten rules: respect and politeness had to be shown, even to the enemy, and this dedication to respectability discouraged more ‘outrageous’ actions that could be classified as more ‘evident’ resistance. Written and verbal exchanges were couched in polite language, seemingly demonstrating respect between the author/speaker and the recipient. This partly reflects contemporary bourgeois social mores and French letter-writing etiquette, yet also provided an acceptable outlet for grievances and potential resistance. Respectability meant not only an adherence to social conventions, but also to legal ones – the law represented the bedrock of the Republic, and was central to French culture.¹³ The infusion of courtesy and judicial reasoning was at the heart of this respectable resistance, one in direct opposition to perceived German barbarism – mockingly referred to as *Kultur* by Allied populations, both occupied and non-occupied.¹⁴

¹¹ ADHS 4M513: report n°1175, 21st April 1917, summary of interviews with 470 people from Tourcoing.

¹² H. Michel, *The Shadow War* (1972), (trans.) R. H. Barry, p.195, cited in Foot, *Resistance*, p.9. Jean Moulin famously engaged in such resistance: Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.166. For 1914-18, see Debarge, ‘Fourmies occupée,’ p.294.

¹³ Annie Deperchin has noted that ‘Les Français sont très légalistes.’ Idem, ‘La Justice et la Guerre du droit,’ at Historial de la Grande Guerre: Colloque – Grande Guerre et Justice, October 2010, accessed online on 3rd October 2011 at <http://www.historial.org/Centre-international-de-recherche/Actualites/Colloques-du-Centre-de-recherche/Colloques-passes/Grande-Guerre-et-Justice>

¹⁴ See ADN 15J87: memoirs of G. Momal, Doyen of Troisvilles, chapter VIII and X. For the wider context of the clash of civilisation vs. *Kultur*, see: Horne and Kramer, *Atrocities*, pp.229-61, 291-325; Kramer, *Dynamic*, p.180-196; Christophe Prochasson, ‘Les intellectuels,’ in *Encyclopédie*, pp.665-676; Anne Rasmussen, ‘Sciences et scientifiques,’ in *Encyclopédie*, pp.684-7; Smith et al., *France*, pp.53-9; Annette Becker, *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930* (Oxford 1998; originally Paris, 1994), (trans.) Helen McPhail, especially p.11-2; Ruth Harris, ‘The “Child of the Barbarian”: Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War,’ *Past and Present*, 141 (November 1993), pp.170-206; Cécile Hautelin, ‘Intellectuels, Barbarie et Occupation: 1914-1918,’

Not all notables intended their protests to be a form of resistance *per se* – instead seeing it as safeguarding the interests of their population. Yet often the Germans recognised it as such, and the desired outcomes could be perceived as resistance.

Protestations Polies?

Oscar Fanyau, former mayor of Hellemmes,¹⁵ wrote to the *Kommandant* of Hellemmes-Lille on 23rd October 1916. Fanyau had refused the German demand of 16th July 1916 that the occupied population declare all metal in its possession, and explained his decision in a letter, stating:

Très sincèrement , je [sic] vous dirai que, si je n'ai pas fait la déclaration des métaux [...] c'est parce que ma conscience s'y refuse.

Ne voyez pas dans mon abstention une refus [sic] d'obéissance ni un manque de respect à l'Autorité allemande, mais ne demandez pas à moi, Français, qui ai eu l'honneur de servir son pays, comme officier de déclarer et de livrer des métaux pour fabriquer des projectiles destinés à tuer mes frères; ceci serait contraire à mon honneur et à mon patriotisme.

Prenz [sic] ces métaux, l'Autorité Allemande connaît [sic] les cuivres et les bronzes qui se trouvent dans ma maison, depuis deux ans, ils sont à la vue des nombreux officiers et soldats qui ont logé chez moi. Ils ont, du reste, été consignés par deux fois, en octobre 1915 par un sous-officier et dernièrement , [sic] 31 Août, par deux gendarmes qui ont visité ma maison.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Commandant, l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.¹⁶

mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction d'Annette Becker (Lille III, 1999); Jean-Yves Le Naour, "Bouffer du Boche" – Animalisation, scatologie et cannibalisme dans la caricature française de la Grande Guerre,' *Quasimodo*, 8 (spring 2006), pp.255-261. Accessed online on 29th June 2009 at <http://www.revue-quasimodo.org/PDFs/8%20-%20LeNaourBoches.pdf>

¹⁵ ADN 9R506: Séance du Conseil Municipal d'Hellemmes, 31st October 1916. Fanyau was mayor from 1904-1912.

¹⁶ AML 4H74: Oscar Fanyau to Kommandant of Hellemmes-Lille, 23rd October 1916.

The language used is polite, the desire for respectability visible – and the accompanying moral-social conundrum evident. Fanyau did not wish to disobey the German authority, to which he proffered respect, but neither could he disobey his patriotic conscience. His conclusion is illustrative of the often performative nature of resistance during this occupation: as long as he had refused the Germans' order and was not seen to give in to their demands, he was willing to allow the Germans to take the metal. This was, however, not enough for the Germans, who imprisoned Fanyau. He died upon entering his cell, two days after writing the letter.¹⁷ The cause of death is unclear.

The centrality of respectability had been visible from the outset. In the aforementioned incident on 5th September 1914, during the Germans' first incursion into Lille,¹⁸ Lieutenant von Hoffel and other soldiers entered the Prefecture. Von Hoffel burst into the office of Prefect Trépont, blaming him for ordering all men of military age to leave for the French front. He blindfolded and physically assaulted Trépont, despite the protestations of the employees of the Prefecture and the French translator. He then announced that Trépont would be shot, at which point the interpreter informed the Lieutenant that Trépont was a functionary holding the title of 'Excellence.' This had the desired effect: eventually Trépont was released.¹⁹ Such an incident demonstrates the strength of social mores and conventions. Even the Germans, holding all the power in this situation, gave in once a certain logic of respectability was invoked. This logic underlined the hundreds, possibly thousands, of notable protests occurring in the Nord during the occupation.

A strong element of patriotism and duty to the Republic also underscored respectable resistance. Trépont himself is proof of this: on 6th November 1914, he was taken to the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 'Tribunal de la Kommandantur,' Schmidt to the Mairie de Lille, 25th October 1916; ADN 9R506: Séance du Conseil Municipal d'Hellemmes, 31st October 1916.

¹⁸ Wallart, *Nord*, p.15.

¹⁹ Cluquenois-Pâque, *Lille*, pp.32-7; Alexandra Richard, 'Le préfet Félix Trépont, ou la difficile affirmation de l'autorité préfectorale dans le Nord, pendant la Première Guerre mondiale,' mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de R. Vandenbussche (Lille III, 2003), p.56.

Kommandantur, where the Germans asked him to collaborate with them, ‘sous conditions de menaces à sa personne.’ Trépont responded: ‘Au-dessus de ma personne, il y a mon devoir.’²⁰ Yet, as with Fanyau, there is a sense in which duty overlapped with performance – not only did opposition have to take place, but it had to be *seen* and *known* to have taken place. Intent and recognition were not mutually exclusive here, for the intent was often precisely for opposition to be recognised. Perhaps these were self-referential performances, cementing one’s position as a notable – it was expected that notables would resist, thus one was a notable *because* one was seen to resist. These elites were proving to themselves, as well as the wider population and the French government, that they were worthy of their position.

This performative aspect was not lost on the population, who seemed receptive to this. Occupation diarist Maria Degnitère mentions municipal opposition to the Germans fairly frequently, using formulations such as ‘M. le maire de Lille écrit une lettre superbe au gouverneur protestant contre cette nouvelle mesure inique.’²¹ She was aware of other letters of protest,²² suggesting the wider population had access to these. More occupation diaries and post-occupation works attest to the population’s knowledge of municipal opposition and the success it occasionally engendered, with some diaries even containing typewritten copies of letters of protests.²³ Indeed, the British and unoccupied French were themselves aware of this phenomenon during the war.²⁴

²⁰ Richard, ‘Le préfet,’ p.63.

²¹ Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 1st May 1916, p.199.

²² *Ibid.*, 16-20th June 1915, p.181; 18th April 1916, p.197.

²³ See, for example, ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 20-24th June, 6th July, and 20th August 1915, and 19th June 1917; ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 8th January and 8th July 1915, 26th August 1916, 18th August 1917; ADN 74J241: personal papers of Pierre Dumont, ‘représentant de commerce [...] employé comme interprète à la mairie de Lille de 1914 à 1919,’ 19th June and 24th July 1916, 27th November 1917. After the occupation, notable protests were acknowledged in: Jean Maucière, *L’Orage sur la ville. Tourcoing pendant l’occupation allemande, 1914-1918* (Paris, 1933), p.6, 10, 61; T. Piquet, *1914-18, Quatre Ans d’Occupation Allemande ou Les Crimes Boches, récits vécus* (Lille, 1921), p.23.

²⁴ See, for example, NA FO383/13: Mr Faulkner to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24th December 1915; letters in ADN 74J223 sent from occupied to unoccupied France, especially one sent from London, 21st June 1916 (n.a.), containing an attached letter sent on 9th May 1916, addressed to Mlle Delomel, Calais, by X, from Lille.

The Germans were under no doubt as to the performative nature of such opposition, seeing it as an attempt by notables to avoid negative repercussions after the war. They perceived these actions as resistance, as the following quotation from a March 1916 note from the *Kommandant* of Tourcoing to the mayor illustrates:

[D]epuis un certain temps la Mairie se complait [sic] à montrer une résistance passive qui ne peut absolument pas être supportée, en fournissant des explications tortueuses et en posant des questions injustifiées. La Commandanture n'a pas envie de lire des lettres qui sont manifestement écrites dans l'intention, pour la Mairie, de se justifier "plus tard" auprès du Gouvernement.

La Mairie voudra donc, à l'avenir, laisser de côté tous les faux fuyants, et déclarer simplement, si elle est en état on [sic] non d'exécuter l'ordre donné.²⁵

Some important issues are raised here. Firstly, the recognition of such actions as passive resistance is evidently crucial to the comprehension of them as such. This is not the only example of the Germans explicitly seeing notable protests as resistance or 'révolte ouverte'.²⁶

Further, the German belief that French notables were engaged in a process of deliberate obstruction, an attempt at slowing down decisions and policy implementation, may have been justified. It is plausible that this was a key motive behind notable protests and other aspects of notable relations with the occupiers. Notables mention this explicitly only rarely.²⁷ Such opposition took place in the Second World War, and is described by François Marcot as 'freinage administratif,' although he categorises it as a form of 'opposition' distinct from actual resistance, because it lacks an element of transgression.²⁸ Yet the pattern outlined is suggestive for this occupation: notables could 'freiner la

²⁵ ADN 9R508: Kommandant of Tourcoing to mayor of Tourcoing, 28th March 1916, cited in 'Procès-verbal de l'entrevue du 31 Mars 1916 entre la Commandanture allemande et le Maire de la Ville (de Tourcoing).' Original emphasis.

²⁶ ADN 9R515: von Carlowitz, Gen. Commandant en Chef, seemingly to Mairie of Hellemmes, 1st November 1917; ADN 9R635: von Graevenitz to mayor of Lille, 13th December 1915.

²⁷ See, for example, Hélot, *Cinquante*, p.129, 21st January 1915.

²⁸ Marcot, 'Les résistants,' p.38. Original emphasis.

machine allemande' until the risk was too great for their own security.²⁹ In the occupied Nord, the sheer number of letters of protests and traces of other forms thereof is striking and justifies the application of this model. The Germans became increasingly frustrated with having to respond to French complaints, and it seems feasible that *Kommandanten* would have spent a considerable amount of time doing so. So too did French notables, but perhaps this was for them the best means of passing time which would normally have been spent working in a fully-functional political-economic sphere. 'Freinage' is examined further below.

It is not clear whether all notables perceived their actions in the same light as the Germans, whether there was always a 'performative intent' or even intent to resist or disrupt. Yet many believed it was important, for the occupied population, but also for the non-occupied French and perhaps for posterity, that they were seen to resist *somehow*. It could be argued that, for the occupied population, all actions and forms of behaviour inevitably had a performative element. Notables were being judged by the wider occupied population, and the Germans, but were also aware of the judgement of the French government. This was taking place in the present, but also potentially in the future. A few cases mention this categorically: the mayor of Halluin, during a heated exchange of letters with the *Kommandant* concerning the cessation of work in the commune's factories, spoke of the duty he and the population had.³⁰ His duty meant that he refused to force workers to recommence work, and to pay the wartime contribution demanded, which he explained thusly:

Je ne puis oublier, en effet, qu'il y a 2.500 Halluinois sous les drapeaux, parmi lesquels mes 5 fils; je ne voudrais pas qu'un seul puisse me reprocher un jour d'avoir aidé à forger des armes contre eux, au mépris du patriotisme et des exigences de la loi naturelle elle-même.³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.39.

³⁰ ADN 9R514: mayor of Halluin to Kommandant Schranck, 27th June 1915.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 26th June 1915.

However, he was happy to pay those contributions whose ends were not linked explicitly to the manufacture of arms and the continuation of the war effort.³² Similarly, acting Prefect Anjubault was keenly aware of the shadow of the French government looming over him and his fellow *occupés*. When interrogated in August 1916 by a German *conseiller de justice* for protesting against the requisition of metals, he stated: ‘ce n’est pas à moi mais à mon gouvernement seul qu’il appartiendra, plus tard, d’approuver ou de désavouer les actes des Français durant l’occupation.’³³ As such, was the intent of respectable resistance actually to resist, or simply self-serving and future-looking, covering one’s position to avoid prospective accusations? Perhaps the two were not mutually exclusive: resistance was often the aim, in the sense of opposing the efficient implementation of German policy, or avoiding aiding the German war effort. Yet a sense of duty, inextricably linked with an awareness of future judgement by the French government,³⁴ did underline such resistance. The two combined to create respectable resistance.

Many French notables hoped that respectability would be met with respectability, and when this was not the case they expressed shock and disgust. In February 1915, the mayor of Tourcoing complained that there seemed to be a shift in the attitude of the Germans. Until then, ‘la courtoisie a régné’ in the relations between the German and French administrations, but the recent change caused the mayor great concern. He asked how he could fulfil his heavy functions ‘si l’on use d’aussi peu de déférence à mon égard?’ He could only do so ‘si je jouis de l’indépendance nécessaire et parfaitement conciliable avec la respect [sic] des lois comme avec les égards dûs aux représentants du pouvoir occupant, égards auxquels je n’ai pas manqué vous le savez.’³⁵ Such a complaint could appear representative of early-occupation *naïveté*; years later, it seemed clear that the

³² *Ibid.*

³³ ADN 9R220: ‘Interrogatoire auquel a été soumis par le Conseiller de Justice allemande Dresen le Sous-Préfet d’Avesnes, faisant fonctions de Préfet du Nord, le 27 Août 1916, à la suite de sa lettre de protestation à l’Autorité allemande contre la réquisition des métaux chez les particuliers.’

³⁴ ADN 9R768: Commissaire de Police de Wattrelos to Prefect, 7th August 1916.

³⁵ ADN 9R752: mayor of Tourcoing to Kommandant, 15th February 1915.

Germans often demanded respect without offering it in return.³⁶ However, this did not halt letters of protest.

A similar sentiment, and the powerlessness of the French administration in reality, is visible in a letter from the mayor of Lille to von Graevenitz in December 1916. Regarding the punishment of the entire city in response to an alleged attack on German soldiers in the *faubourg des Postes*,³⁷ the mayor noted:

La population de ce faubourg a déjà été punie, et deux mois plus tard, alors que les coupables ont été arrêtés vous rendez responsable toute la population intérieure de la Ville qui n'a, pour ainsi dire, aucune relation avec ce faubourg et qui n'a cessé de montrer depuis deux ans l'attitude la plus digne.

Nous sommes donc condamnés sans avoir pu nous défendre,

Je [sic] n'ai aucun moyen d'en appeler de ce jugement et suis forcé de le subir, mais ce ne sera pas sans avoir élevé une énergique protestation.³⁸

Even from within this subordinate position, the mayor felt it necessary – and perhaps beneficial, although to whom is unclear – to raise an official complaint.

Often respectable resistance contained underlying irony or humour – or perhaps simply *naïveté* combined with unfortunate phrasing. A complex case illustrates this. On 20th June 1915, the Germans informed the municipalities of the towns of Roubaix and Valenciennes that they had to pay a 150,000-franc fine for the Allied bombing of Alexandria and Haïfa.³⁹ Four days later, the acting mayor of Roubaix wrote to the *Kommandant*, arguing against the fine. He did not understand why these two towns, thousands of kilometres from the site of the bombardment, were chosen above others. He also complained about the most recent fine of 100,000 francs levied on the town for

³⁶ Occasionally the Germans forced respect, such as the order obliging *occupés* to salute or tip their hats at the German officers, which the French found humiliating. Blanclain, *Quand Guillaume*, p.131-2; Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.313.

³⁷ For more detail on this affair, see AML 4H143: von Graevenitz to mayor, 28th December 1916.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, mayor to von Graevenitz, 29th December 1916. Original emphasis.

³⁹ ADN 9R730: Kommandant Hofmann to Mairie de Roubaix, 20th June 1915.

the alleged shooting of a German sentry by an *occupé*. Regarding this latter point, he used polite language to deliver a direct argument, noting that the alleged shooting was an event which, he stated,

nos enquêtes très approfondies auprès des habitants du quartier n'ont pas parvenu à établir et qui nous permet de croire que cette sentinelle a pu être sujette à des hallucinations communes aux soldats en temps de guerre, [par conséquent] l'Administration municipale, contrainte et forcée, a consenti à payer cette amende parce que les faits reprochés se seraient passés sur le territoire de notre ville et qu'ils pouvaient être exacts, bien que personne n'ait pu le démontrer.⁴⁰

Here, the municipal council disagreed with the Germans, but through the form and content of its language gave the appearance of respecting them and social conventions enough to cede to their demands. Yet the suggestion that this German could have been hallucinating and the lack of proof appears rather provocative and mischievous in tone.

With regard to the 150,000-franc fine, the municipality refused to pay, seeing it as contrary to international law. It asked the *Kommandant* 'de vouloir bien transmettre la présente à M. le Chef du Quartier Général allemand.'⁴¹ Thus resistance took the form of a polite protest, allowing opposition to the Germans whilst remaining respectable. The German response was to send 25 municipal councillors of Roubaix to Güstrow as hostages. It is not clear when they were transported, but they returned on 11th August 1915,⁴² presumably because the contribution was paid, as had happened in other cases.⁴³

Despite the effusion of courtesy in the language used by French notables, the Germans occasionally did not approve of the linguistic content of letters of protest. In August 1917, Aunjubault complained that the *Kommandant* of Baisieux had changed the dates of school holidays from those he had established, concluding: 'La solution de questions

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, H. Thérin, 1^{er} adjoint faisant fonctions de Maire, to Hofmann, 24th June 1915.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² ADN 9R507: Président de la Délégation spécial to Prefect, 12th August 1915.

⁴³ For example, ADN 9R714: mayor of Quesnoy-sur-Deule to Prefect, 29th June 1915.

de cette nature n'ayant aucun rapport avec les besoins d'une armée d'occupation, je demande à l'autorité supérieure allemande de faire rapporter la décision prise sur la Commandanture de Baisieux.⁴⁴ Von Graevenitz was not pleased with Anjubault's formulation, informing him:

dans vos rapports avec les autorités militaires allemandes, vous devez vous appliquer à prendre un ton plus respectueux et vous servir de la langue allemande.

La fermeture de l'école de Baisieux a eu lieu pour des raisons militaires. Il n'y a pas eu de motif pour modifier les mesures prises par la Commandanture locale.⁴⁵

This is the only indication of French notables being told to use German in their letters. German demands were usually transmitted in the original language with translations, but this is not the case for French-language documents. Most of the time French notables were free to write in French.

Frequency and Form: Resistance as Refusal and Reproach

The target and form of notable protests varied greatly, but one of the most frequent examples involved German demands for lists of *occupés*. The Germans constantly asked for such lists, presumably in order to better 'know' and thus exploit the population. They were especially interested in potential labourers, mostly unemployed men or men of military age; but they also wanted information on those who could be repatriated, reducing the strain on the German military to police and generally provide for them. Both relied on the logic of control and efficiency. This information was kept by the local French administration, and the simplest means of access was for the French administrators to hand over the documents. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the reality was far from simple.

⁴⁴ ADN 9R510: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 7th August 1917.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, von Graevenitz to Anjubault, 4th September 1917.

The mayor of Roubaix refused on 8th January 1915 to give the Germans the list of the classes of 1914 and 1915, for which he was threatened with deportation.⁴⁶ Four days later, he refused a further demand for the classes of 1916 and 1917. The Germans changed tactics: another refusal meant the population would be deprived of flour.⁴⁷ If this did occur, it did not dissuade such resistance among other notables. In March 1915, the mayor of Tourcoing ‘est arrêté. Prétextes invoqués: refus de fournir la liste des chômeurs; refus de verser un nouvel acompte sur la contribution de guerre.’⁴⁸ The mayor of Lille was acting similarly at this time – the Germans demanded a list of 1,200-1,500 ‘indigents susceptibles d’être rapatriés en France,’ but the mayor informed Governor von Heinrich:

Je regrette de ne pouvoir vous fournir cette liste car ma situation de Magistrat élu de cette population m’interdit absolument de m’asseoir à une mesure qui aurait pour but d’éloigner de leur foyer, contre leur gré, un grand nombre de mes concitoyens.

Je ne doute pas, Excellence, que vous ne reconnaissiez qu’il s’agit ici pour moi d’un devoir de conscience auquel je ne puis me dérober.⁴⁹

The final sentence illustrates the respectable nature of such resistance, born out of a sense of duty and a humanitarian impulse. The mayor hoped that the Governor, as a general loyal to his own country, would at least comprehend the decision, if not support it. Indeed, this was the case on certain occasions. In August 1917, an unknown number of workers were ordered to present themselves at the *Kommandantur* of Wattrelos, with suitcases and provisions, presumably to be deported for forced labour. The *Commissaire de Police* was ordered by the *Kommandant* to accompany them.⁵⁰ In response, he approached the mayor, noting that he already suffered in giving these workers their summons, and that ‘il n’appartenait point à un Français de conduire un autre Français quel qu’il fut à l’ennemi.’ The mayor, however, reminded the *Commissaire* that this was

⁴⁶ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 8th January 1915. Many entries involve Roubaix and its population.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 12th January 1915.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8th March 1915.

⁴⁹ ADN 9R668: mayor of Lille to Governor von Heinrich, 22nd March 1915.

⁵⁰ ADN 9R768: Marie de Wattrelos, ‘Feuille de renseignements transmise à M. le Commissaire de Police le 2.8.1917.’

a German order, to be carried out under threat of imprisonment. The *Commissaire* subsequently approached the *Kommandant* himself, arguing that: ‘comme fonctionnaire français je ne pouvais pas faire exécuter un ordre contraire à ma dignité et à mes sentiments patriotiques, que son loyalisme était assez grand pour comprendre la justesse de ce refus.’ The *Kommandant* ‘répondit que c’était bien,’ informing the *Commissaire* that he only had to sign a register of those workers present at the *Kommandantur*, rather than lead them there himself – described as a ‘solution heureuse.’⁵¹ Perhaps such an event, along with the ‘respectability met with respectability’ theory, was why the mayor of Lille ended another protest with: ‘Vous êtes soldat, Excellence, vous placez trop haut le sentiment du devoir pour vouloir exiger que je trahisse le mien. Si j’agissais autrement, vous n’auriez pour moi au fond de vous-même que du mépris.’⁵²

Unlike some other forms of opposition, such as the *affaire des sacs*, administrative refusal to give the Germans lists was not confined to 1915. Mayor of Lille Charles Delesalle refused to give the Germans various lists throughout the occupation, among other protests.⁵³ For example, on 3rd January 1916, the Germans demanded the list of workers at the *ateliers de la Société de la Gare du Nord*, many of whom had not turned up for work recently. They emphasised that such workers were not being used for war operations, but for tasks which assured the good functioning of Lille’s transport network.⁵⁴ Delesalle responded that he could not access the lists of a private company and ‘d’ailleurs si j’avais cette liste en mains mon devoir me défendrait impérieusement d’intervenir auprès d’eux et d’influencer en aucune façon sur une décision qui ne relève que de la conscience de chacun.’⁵⁵

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Commissaire de Police de Wattrelos to Prefect, 3rd August 1917.

⁵² ADN 9R693: mayor of Lille to von Heinrich, 18th June 1915.

⁵³ Delesalle defended Lille ‘comme un beau diable. Mais que faire, le couteau sous la gorge?’ Redier, *Allemands*, p.177.

⁵⁴ ADN 9R694: von Graevenitz to mayor of Lille, 3rd January 1916.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, mayor of Lille to von Graevenitz, 4th January 1916.

The next day, von Graevenitz reiterated his order.⁵⁶ Delesalle continued his refusal, explaining that the municipality had the right to requisition goods but not people; it had hitherto carried out all public works demanded of it by the Germans via its own workers, but in this instance the Germans would have to advertise for workers themselves.⁵⁷ Indeed, there are numerous examples of German-authored calls for volunteer workers, especially in Lille.⁵⁸ The very existence of these ‘appels’ in an area in which the Germans were the dominant group suggests that this form of respectable protest could be, and was, successful. This was at least the case until the Easter 1916 *enlèvements*, which the Germans justified in part by a lack of sufficient volunteers.⁵⁹ Success was not guaranteed, though. Across the Nord and beyond, municipalities and notables refused to give the Germans the lists they demanded throughout the occupation, and were subsequently punished – individual notables being imprisoned or fined, or entire municipalities fined,⁶⁰ among other punishments.

Perhaps because of the risk of sanctions, not all notables followed same course of action. In a letter to the acting Prefect in August 1916, the *Commissaire de Police* of Wattrelos insinuated that the mayor was complicit in providing lists of ‘jardiniers’ who could be forcibly employed by the Germans in the Motte factory in Roubaix. The *Commissaire* himself had refused to provide the lists to Germans, but gave the information to the mayor, leaving the latter in a difficult position. The *Commissaire*’s motives are evident: ‘Quoique la Mairie ne m’ait absolument fait aucune remarque défavorable, j’ai voulu vous tenir au courant de ce fait et pour qu’à l’avenir il ne soit point dénaturé et pour vous

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, von Graevenitz to mayor of Lille, 5th January 1916.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, mayor of Lille to von Graevenitz, 5th January 1916.

⁵⁸ For example, see the German posters for 20th October 1916 in: ADN 9R519: Lambersart; ADN 9R702: Lomme; ADN 9R704: Le Marais. See also ADN 9R708: La Madeleine, 1st September 1916; ADN 9R716: Roubaix, 28th August 1916; ADN 9R746: Lille, 8th January 1916, and Tourcoing, 18th January, 21st March, 28th June 1916; ADN 9R745: Tourcoing, 15th March, 15th May, 30th August 1915; ADN 9R718: Roubaix, 7th November 1916; ADN 9R717: Lille, 2nd February 1916.

⁵⁹ ‘Actes de l’Autorité Allemande: Proclamation,’ *BdL*, n°151 (23rd April 1916).

⁶⁰ See, for example, Mauclère, *L’Orage*, p.61; de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.222; Cardon, ‘La gestion,’ p.65-6; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.182.

donner les raisons de ma conduite.⁶¹ Was he fearful of future reproaches from the Prefect, the mayor, the French government, or others? Whatever the case, the *Commissaire* wanted to register his resistance officially, even if its usefulness was questionable.

Centralised Criticism?

Notable protests were mostly made on an individual basis, but there is some suggestion of pseudo-centralisation. Trépont, who himself had written numerous letters of protest, ordered this and other forms of opposition.⁶² Indeed, this was the very reason for his deportation to Germany in February 1915⁶³ and his replacement with German-approved Anjubault.⁶⁴ Anjubault was no mere puppet, however, despite Trépont's accusations in his memoirs.⁶⁵ Indeed, Anjubault wrote numerous letters of protest. He complained, among other things, about the 1916 deportations,⁶⁶ the use of French military medical personnel in the occupied area,⁶⁷ and the use of civilians for military ends,⁶⁸ especially children.⁶⁹ Consequently, Anjubault invoked the ire of the Germans on many occasions, and was among the four *Lillois* hostages taken in July 1915 for the alleged harbouring of escaped Allied prisoners of war.⁷⁰ He was eventually sent to Antoing in Belgium with his family in January 1918, although the motives behind this are unknown.⁷¹

⁶¹ ADN 9R768: Commissaire de Police de Wattrelos to Prefect, 7th August 1916.

⁶² Richard, 'Le préfet,' p.63-4.

⁶³ Cluquenois-Pâque, *Lille*, p.116; Wallart, *Nord*, p.31; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.95.

⁶⁴ Hélot, *Cinquante*, p.163.

⁶⁵ Richard, 'Le préfet,' p.67-70, especially 67-8.

⁶⁶ ADN 9R774: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 17th April 1916.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7th August 1917.

⁶⁸ ADN 9R841: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 26th October, 11th November, 18th December 1916; 18th June 1917.

⁶⁹ ADN 9R761: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 7th August 1917.

⁷⁰ ADN 9R655: proclamation of von Graevenitz, Lille, 27th July 1915; von Graevenitz to l'Administration de la Ville de Lille, 26th July 1915. The other three hostages were Mgr. Charost, Bishop of Lille, Charles Delesalle, Mayor of Lille, and M. Crepy St Leger (unknown).

⁷¹ ADN 9R220: typewritten note, n.d., n.a., including the message Anjubault received on 8th January 1918.

Jules Hélot's wartime diary, published in 1919, provides a case study hinting at the pre-meditated, loosely organised nature of some respectable resistance. As president of the *Chambre de Commerce* of Cambrai, Hélot was an influential notable who, he claims, encouraged and led respectable resistance across various communes.⁷² Hélot appears from the outset to have been more headstrong than other notables: on 17th November 1914, the Germans demanded a 59,000-franc war contribution from the municipality of Cambrai. Under the threat of requisitioning works of art from the museum and library, the municipal council decided to pay 20,000 francs; Hélot suggested that they give nothing and 'offrir nos personnes comme otages, car à cette exigence, une autre succédera, sans qu'on puisse en voir la fin.' The council rejected this tactic.⁷³ Hélot was consequently displeased with the behaviour of others, and preached resistance:

Qui ne risque rien, n'a rien, et les fonctionnaires ont tort de ne pas faire comme nous, de ne pas payer un peu d'audace; après tout, on ne risque que d'être détenu quarante-huit heures, en mettant les choses au pis. Il n'en serait pas ainsi, sans doute, s'ils savaient ce qui se passe dans ces réunions, où je prêche et exalte le patriotisme et la résistance à leurs exigences; ces conférences ressemblent quelque peu, ma foi, à des réunions de conspirateurs.⁷⁴

Indeed, Hélot's idea of resistance involved vigorous protests, not simply inaction. In January 1915 he expressed anger at the *percepteur* of Mœuvres, who was

convaincu qu'il fera tout son devoir en se refusant à faire la recette autant qu'il le pourra; tâcher de ne rien faire est le seul effort qui lui paraisse digne d'être tenté. Voilà la mentalité de fonctionnaires [...] Si encore les chefs de service étaient là pour les remettre dans le droit chemin!⁷⁵

He contrasts this with the behaviour of the *percepteur* of Clary, who that morning went to the *Chambre de Commerce* to deal with the loans required and to speak about the latest German tax. This *fonctionnaire* 'a parfaitement saisi la nécessité de refuser

⁷² Hélot had contact with and influence over the following communes, among others, some beyond the Nord: Valenciennes, Moeuvres, Clary, Saint-Quentin, Noyelles, Cantaing, Bermerain, Carnières, and Solesmes. See Hélot, *Cinquante*, passim.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.72, 17th November 1914.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.110-11, 30th December 1914.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.120, 11th January 1915.

jusqu'au point de faire casser la corde, et il va préconiser la résistance que j'ai recommandée.⁷⁶ The logic and intent behind Hélot's respectable resistance echoed that of others:

J'estime que par dignité personnelle, et pour défendre nos intérêts nationaux, nous ne devons céder qu'à la force [...] Cette résistance, en dehors des raisons primordiales énoncées, s'impose également pour éviter le danger de voir discuter le remboursement plus tard, par nos administrations, sous prétexte que nous aurions cédé trop facilement aux injonctions de l'ennemi, ou que nous n'aurions pas agi en prenant toutes les précautions indispensables, dans la mesure du possible.⁷⁷

Such resistance was occasionally successful, but Hélot perceived it in terms of buying time. On 21st January 1915, he went to Noyelles to confront the officer in charge of requisitioning and met with success: 'En présence de ma résistance, il a abandonné ses demandes; évidemment il y reviendra, mais c'est au moins du temps gagné.'⁷⁸ Similarly, he noted the next month: 'Je prêche partout la résistance par inertie, ne répondant à la brutalité que par des atermoiements. Mais cela devient très dur et il importe de soutenir les uns et les autres dans leur bon vouloir.'⁷⁹ He spoke of 'la force d'inertie' but admitted that notables should cede when collective reprisals were likely⁸⁰ – and that 'chacun restait en face de sa conscience, qu'il ne fallait pas faire du donquichottisme.'⁸¹ Nevertheless, they should be willing to accept personal punishments: 'Je disais encore aujourd'hui à des maires que j'excitais à la résistance et qui se plaignaient de leur situation si critique et si menaçante: Nos chers soldats sont bien plus méritants que nous, ils sacrifient leur personne sans réticence. Comment pourrions-nous nous plaindre?'⁸²

However, as the realities of occupation entrenched themselves, Hélot's attitude became more flexible: 'depuis que j'ai constaté qu'ils étaient arrivés à dominer tellement le pays

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.129, 21st January 1915.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.153, 13th February 1915.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.154, 15th February 1915.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.204, 19th April 1915.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.194, 3rd April 1915.

sous leur joug, et qu'ils ne reculeraient devant rien, je suis résigné à concevoir que de deux maux il faut choisir le moindre.'⁸³ Still, despite constant punishments, Hélot continued to preach various types of resistance and certain notables continued to practice it throughout the length of the occupation.⁸⁴ Hélot advised municipal councils of different communes, who consulted him, to resist as much as possible, which many did.⁸⁵ Tactics included lying to the Germans about the amount of money or goods a commune possessed.⁸⁶ This was sometimes successful – in September 1915, Hélot proclaimed: 'Décidément la résistance, les attermolements, ont souvent du bon,' giving the example of the German demand for 32 million francs from the municipality of Cambrai, increasing by 100,000 francs a day, eventually reduced to 16 million.⁸⁷

By July 1916, Hélot had helped to create a syndicate of communes for mutual economic aid, but the Germans saw this as an opportunity to extract more money from the *occupés*. The syndicate was unanimous in choosing resistance, and Hélot decided on a respectable form – a letter: 'Ils ont tous approuvé les termes du refus de nous soumettre à ces ordres. Conçue très ferme et très digne, cette lettre que j'avais voulue polie dans la forme a donc été adoptée.'⁸⁸ In late 1917, members of the syndicate all agreed 'sur l'impossibilité de résister utilement,' but acknowledged that Hélot should nevertheless send a letter of protest in his name 'disant que je me fais l'écho des doléances de tous.'⁸⁹ Respectable resistance had thus morphed from frequent, pseudo-organised notable protests based on a genuine hope for policy reversal or at least buying time, into rare individual protests carried out in the understanding that they were in vain. Other

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.338, 28th October 1915.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, especially p.247, 10th June 1915; p.271-5 2nd-8th July 1915; p.507, 26th July 1917; p.526-7, 2nd November 1917.

⁸⁵ See, for example, the municipality of Carnières: *ibid.*, p.152, 12th February 1915; et passim.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.151-2, 12th February 1915.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.316, 21st September 1915.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.415, 9th July 1916.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.527, 2nd November 1917.

instances of respectable resistance seem more spontaneous,⁹⁰ but a common factor between both planned and spontaneous protests was the primacy of judicial reasoning.

Law: an Illusory Shield and a Blunt Sword

Notables constantly referred to the law to justify and bolster their protests. In particular, they cited the 1864 Geneva Convention and the 1907 Hague Convention, representing humanitarian and international law respectively.⁹¹ Becker has written on the importance of these conventions for the *occupés*,⁹² calling the Hague Convention ‘un mantra toujours répété’ but which ‘ne les protégeait guère.’⁹³ The problem was the ill-defined juridical status of military occupations, dealt with by article 43 of the Hague Convention. Military occupations represented a situation that was neither war nor peace, yet both at the same time.⁹⁴

Further, the Hague Convention had been undermined by caveats and non-compliance during the signing of the accords. Russia, Austria and Germany reserved the right not to apply article 44,⁹⁵ which banned belligerents from forcing an occupied population from providing information on the army or means of defence of another belligerent.⁹⁶ The wording of the Convention was extremely ambiguous. A distinction was drawn between the ‘army of occupation’ and the ‘fighting army,’ especially in the oft-cited article 52, which begins: ‘Requisitions in kind and services shall not be demanded from municipalities or inhabitants except for the needs of the army of occupation.’⁹⁷

⁹⁰ See, for example, ADN 9R827: ‘Comparution à l’Hôtel de ville devant M. le Commandant des femmes transportées dans les Ardennes en Avril 1916 et revenues depuis à Tourcoing,’ 1^{er} June 1917.

⁹¹ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.88.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.85-176.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.87.

⁹⁶ Annexe to the Hague Convention, section III, article 44.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, article 52.

However, identifying precisely where the needs of the army of occupation finished and where those of the wider fighting army began was not easy.⁹⁸

French notables continued to rely on a legal form of protest despite this, and despite Germany's disregard for international agreements in her 1902 manual on the laws of war,⁹⁹ the violation of Belgian neutrality in 1914,¹⁰⁰ or other acts flouting international law.¹⁰¹ Of course, all belligerents violated international law in some way during the war.¹⁰² The role of the law in notable protests was at its strongest when forced labour or manufacturing goods for the enemy were the targets of criticism. On 1st April 1916, the *Kommandant* of Loos received two letters of protest concerning the events of the previous morning, involving 30 young men from the commune being forced to work in railway construction in Sequedin. The first was from the mayor of Loos, who invoked article 52 of the Hague Convention, which forbade belligerents to force occupied populations to take part in operations against their own country. The reason for this lesson in international law was clear: the municipality considered the construction of a railway behind a battlefield as analogous to the construction of trenches or fortifications. As such, it 'ne saurait, en aucune façon, s'associer à cet acte de travail obligatoire,' and considered its duty to ask the German authority 'de ne pas continuer à faire participer ces jeunes gens de la Commune aux travaux en question.'¹⁰³

The second letter was from Anjubault, demonstrating further the language of respectful, legal protest. He noted the considerable importance of railways in modern warfare and that, without even mentioning the Hague Convention, since the international conference of 1874 in Brussels

⁹⁸ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.170-1.

⁹⁹ Hull, *Absolute*, p.120.

¹⁰⁰ Malbone W. Graham, Jr., 'Neutrality and the World War,' *The American Journal of International Law*, 17:4 (October 1923), p.720; Larry Zuckerman, *The Rape of Belgium: The Untold Story of World War I* (New York, 2004), p.9, 63, 89.

¹⁰¹ Such as U-boat warfare: Kramer, *Dynamic*, p.47.

¹⁰² Deperchin, 'La Justice.'

¹⁰³ ADN 9R707: mayor of Loos to Kommandant, 1st April 1916.

la doctrine prohibait la réquisition de travaux sur les voies ferrées comme constituant pour les populations l'obligation de prendre part aux opérations de guerre contre leur patrie.

Cette théorie étant admise depuis plus de quarante ans dans un sens favorable aux habitants de pays occupés, j'ai l'impérieux devoir d'intervenir auprès de l'Autorité supérieure allemande pour lui demander de mettre fin à la contrainte dont sont actuellement victimes des jeunes gens de la commune de Loos.¹⁰⁴

In the long term, neither letter had a substantial impact – the Germans did not accept, or ignored, these legal protests.

L'affaire des sacs

Numerous letters of protest contained similar stylistic, polemical flourishes and logic. Article 52 of the Hague Convention was cited frequently, especially concerning the manufacture of sandbags, gasmasks, or other work with potential military ends. This was most noticeable in June 1915 with the *affaire des sacs*.¹⁰⁵ At this time, the Germans had ordered many *occupés* to create sandbags, fencing and other material which they claimed would be used for purely defensive or non-military purposes in the occupied area. Once it became clear that such goods were being sent to the front and/or in response to physical and verbal attacks from compatriots, the workers making them refused to work – in Becker's words, they 'mènent le combat'¹⁰⁶ – primarily in the Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing area and its environs.¹⁰⁷

It is hard to pinpoint when the workers first stopped, but by 18th June Governor von Heinrich wrote to the mayor of Lille, demanding that he use 'toute son influence pour déterminer les gens à reprendre le travail.' The Governor, aware of the importance of performance and judgement for the *occupés*, added: 'Pour garantir les ouvriers contre les

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Anjubault to Kommandant of Loos, 1st April 1916.

¹⁰⁵ See the 'affaire Orlianges' sub-section of part I, chapter IV.

¹⁰⁶ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.176.

¹⁰⁷ See the majority of documents in AMT H4A32 and AML 4H121.

désagréments après la conclusion de la paix, le Gouvernement est prêt à leur délivrer un certificat constatant qu'ils ont été forcés au travail.' In the case of non-compliance of workers, the city's administration would be charged with manufacturing the sandbags. If even that did not work, the raw materials would be sent to Germany, and the costs of transport and manufacture levied on Lille.¹⁰⁸ The response of the mayor was unequivocal:

Je regrette devoir vous faire respectueusement remarquer qu'il m'est impossible d'entrer dans vos désirs.

Obliger un ouvrier ou un patron à travailler est absolument contraire à mon droit; lui conseiller de travailler, absolument contraire à mon devoir, que me dicte impérieusement l'art. 52 de la Convention de la Haye.

[... The proposed solution] ne peut même pas être envisagée, car mon devoir de Maire français me l'interdit plus formellement encore.

Quelque risque personnel que je puisse encourir, je regrette donc ne pouvoir vous donner satisfaction.¹⁰⁹

The disagreement continued for a few days.¹¹⁰ Eventually, the mayor spoke to the head of the military police. He was very courteous, asking the mayor precisely what punishment would make him acquiesce, and how the situation could be resolved amicably. The transcript of the conversation demonstrates the frankness with which the two spoke to each other, and the strength of the mayor's resistance (see Fig. 7).¹¹¹ The final German response included a 6pm-5am curfew and a suspension of *laissez-passer* for the western part of Lille. A poster stated that the population's conception of article 52 of the Hague Convention was false – the work demanded did *not* comprise operations against France.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ ADN 9R693: von Heinrich to mayor of Lille, 18th June 1915.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, mayor of Lille to von Heinrich, 19th June 1915.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21st June 1915; von Heinrich to mayor of Lille, 20th June 1915.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 'Affaire de la confection des sacs: Souvenir d'une conversation avec le Capitaine Himmel le jeudi 24 juin 1915.'

¹¹² *Ibid.*, German poster, 30th June 1915.

On the same day, in the commune of Halluin, where the mayor had also protested against work involving sandbags,¹¹³ the Germans put up another poster. Acknowledging the role of article 52 as the basis of current disagreements, the *Kommandant* stated that it was neither up to him nor French notables to decide who was right, because they were not competent; it would be the work of diplomats after the war. For the moment, ‘c’est exclusivement l’interprétation de l’autorité militaire allemande qui est valable [...] Aujourd’hui et peut-être encore pour longtemps [...] il n’y a qu’une seule volonté et c’est la volonté de l’autorité militaire Allemande.’¹¹⁴ In other circumstances, the Germans used their own comprehension of the Convention to justify their actions, such as war contributions allegedly justified by Article 49.¹¹⁵ In this instance, the Germans wanted to stop all resistance:

Je puis vous assurer que l’autorité militaire Allemande ne se départira sous aucune condition de ses demandes et ses droits, **MÊME SI UNE VILLE DE 15.000 HABITANTS EN DEVRAIT [sic] PERIR.**

[...] C’est le dernier mot et le bon conseil que je vous donne ce soir: revenons à la raison et faites en sorte que tous les ouvriers reprennent le travail sans délai, autrement **VOUS EXPOSEZ VOTRE VILLE, VOS FAMILLES** et votre personne même **AUX PLUS GRANDS MALHEURS.**¹¹⁶

Despite these events, the mayor of Lille was unwavering. On 3rd July 1915, he told von Heinrich ‘vous sévissez contre une immense population innocente qui jusqu’ici a fait preuve, malgré ses souffrances, du plus grand calme.’ The reason was that some workers refused ‘de leur plein gré et après réflexion’ to manufacture sandbags for the trenches ‘à l’heure où leurs maris ou leurs frères se font tuer héroïquement devant ces mêmes tranchées’; and because the mayor ‘refuse d’intervenir et de conseiller de faire ce qu’il considère en son âme et conscience comme un crime contre sa patrie.’ Von Heinrich demanded 375,000 francs for the confection of 600,000 sandbags. The mayor

¹¹³ ADN 9R514: P. mayor of Halluin to Kommandant Schranck, 27th June 1915.

¹¹⁴ AMT H4A32: German poster, Halluin, 30th June 1915.

¹¹⁵ AML 4H134: German poster, Lille, 6th December 1917; Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.210-11.

¹¹⁶ AMT H4A32: German poster, Halluin, 30th June 1915. Original emphasis.

responded: 'Je regrette ne pouvoir acquiescer à cet ordre.'¹¹⁷ The *recevreur municipal* and *adjoint au maire* were arrested, and the Germans forced their way into the *Recette Municipale* to take the money.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, eight leading *confectionneurs* had been arrested, seven of whom were sent to Germany on 2nd July. They returned to Lille on 7th August, presumably because work had recommenced in their factories,¹¹⁹ which happened elsewhere after the arrest (or threat thereof) of factory owners¹²⁰ – although this was not always the case.¹²¹

Industriels Insoumis?

Contrary to the mayor of Lille's insistence that the decision not to work was down to individual workers, industrialists themselves appear to have played an active role in the *affaire*. Many refused to continue supervising work for the Germans, although they did not necessarily encourage their workers to stop. This was the case for Tourcoing-based industrialist M. Couvreur, threatened with arrest and transportation to Germany.¹²² He had 'faisait travailler pour les Allemands depuis plusieurs mois' and despite his altered position, emphasised that his employees were free to continue working.¹²³ What accounted for his change of heart? The popular mood of rebellion and apparent revenge against those working for the Germans? The realisation that the gabions and fences his factory was making were probably being used for trench construction? Whatever the case, Couvreur made his decision following a discussion with fellow industrialists. This

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, mayor of Lille to von Heinrich, 3rd July 1915. Original emphasis.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 'Renseignements confidentiels et très urgents,' n.a., 5th July 1915.

¹¹⁹ ADN 9R639: typewritten document by *le sous-inspecteur* [Waxy], dated 22nd August 1915.

¹²⁰ See, for example, AMT 4H32: handwritten note, n.a., n.d., stating that when the Germans threatened M. Tiberhien of 'Mm. Tiberghien frères' with arrest and transportation to Germany, he engaged in a dialogue with his workers, who turned up to work the next morning. However, other documents state that it was an engineer and the director of the factory, M. Louis, who was threatened with arrest and transportation. It seems plausible that both faced the same punishment. *Ibid.*, Commissaire Central de Tourcoing to mayor, 21st May 1915; handwritten document, n.a., 24th June 1915.

¹²¹ See *ibid.*, typewritten document, 20-25th June 1915, n.a. M. Couvreur was arrested and sent to Valenciennes when he and his employees refused to work. The workforce was replaced by German soldiers.

¹²² *Ibid.*, typewritten document, 20-25th June 1915, n.a.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, handwritten document, 18th June 1915, n.a.

is mirrored in *Invasion* '14 when industrialist Hennedyck faced a dilemma: 'If he worked for the enemy he would be guilty of treason; on the other hand, if he refused, he would be leaving those of his fellow mill-owners in the lurch who had kept their works running under orders from the enemy, to say nothing of exposing the working population to reprisals.'¹²⁴ He was shown his 'duty' by the workers, and finally persuaded other industrialists to lead resistance – despite arguments that it was their duty to safeguard French industry for after the war – which led to their imprisonment and transportation to Germany.¹²⁵

The reality was no less agonising or dramatic for industrialists. Again, an awareness of future judgement combined with a performative element to shape conduct. In the middle of the *affaire des sacs*, the *Syndicat des Fabricants* of Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing stated that it 's'occupe et se préoccupe avec un intérêt louable des questions qui surgiront au moment de la reprise du travail après l'occupation.'¹²⁶ But it emphasised the extreme importance of the question of recent German orders that French industrialists work for the German authority in tasks with a clear military end. The troubling dilemma, it said, 'est celui-ci: "Ou bien vous travaillerez, ou bien nous nous emparerons de votre usine..."' The *Syndicat* admitted that 'La force prime ici le droit.' However, it had some questions and potential answers:

Sans blâmer la décision que chacun croira devoir prendre, n'y a-t-il pas lieu cependant de protester collectivement... et... de plus, n'est-il pas bon d'examiner les conséquences possibles de ce travail forcé?

Il est tout d'abord indiscutable qu'une protestation unanime de tous les industriels du pays – qui sont une puissance à ne pas négliger, aura plus de force qu'une protestation d'industriels isolés devant l'Autorité allemande, devant nos ouvriers, et devant le Gouvernement français, qui, ne l'oublions pas, sera le juge en dernier ressort.

¹²⁴ Van der Meersch, *Invasion*, p.130.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.139.

¹²⁶ AMT 4HA32: typewritten document, seemingly written by the *Syndicat des Fabricants* and signed by 'Dubar,' 7th July 1915. Dubar could be industrialist Firmin Dubar, involved in the clandestine paper *La Patience*.

Cette protestation, dira-t-on, sera platonique devant l'Autorité allemande. C'est possible. Mais quand un droit est violé par la force, la protestation s'impose malgré tout, et elle frappe d'autant plus qu'elle ferme un bloc.¹²⁷

The notion of a *token* protest demonstrates the understanding of this resistance as futile and performative. These employers were aware of the judgement of fellow *occupés*, particularly their workers, whom they hoped to both impress and inform:

Et devant les ouvriers? [...] il semble qu'une protestation générale et collective de toute l'industrie viendrait renforcer sensiblement celle que peut formuler l'industriel. Car il ne faut pas que les ouvriers disent que les patrons n'ont pas le courage de protester tous ensemble et énergiquement quand ils se sont sentis menacés. Déjà, ils laissent entendre que les patrons gagnent de l'argent en travaillant pour les Allemands... Que leur intérêt est satisfait.... et... les mauvais esprits sont tout près [sic] à les rendre complices. Le silence patronal pourrait aussi être interprété dans ce sens.

Dans cette protestation collective, on pourrait en même temps faire savoir à l'ouvrier qui l'ignore, que l'Autorité allemande n'a pas le droit de le forcer à travailler et d'aller le chercher entre deux gendarmes. C'est aux patrons à éclairer leurs ouvriers.¹²⁸

The *Syndicat* also perceived a legal justification for resistance. It was 'indiscutable' that manufacturing sandbags for trenches breached the Hague Convention. Agreeing that a collective refusal was stronger than an isolated protest, the *Syndicat* questioned what the consequences of such action vis-à-vis the French government after the war could be. It reasoned that during the occupation an industrialist refusing to work could be imprisoned, and 'Son industrie est accaparée par les allemands [sic] qui la font marcher ou la détruisent.' However, after the war the French government would probably repay the industrialist for damages ensued. The alternative was less favourable: to manufacture sandbags was to play a part in war operations: 'c'est comme si l'on travaillait pour

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

fabriquer des obus, des balles!.... C'est un crime de Lèse-Patrie indéniable, qui pourra être imputé à l'industriel, qui a consenti à faire travailler lui-même.'¹²⁹

Its conclusions were subsequently unequivocal:

il est possible qu'un refus absolu à opposer aux allemands, [sic] avec toutes ses conséquences, soit le seul admis et soit la seule ligne de conduite qu'accepte le Gouvernement français, et que la raison très louable de vouloir sauvegarder [sic] une industrie et le gagne-pain des ouvriers ne soit pas jugée suffisante pour une justification.¹³⁰

Yet not everyone agreed on this point. In their desire for respectability and their adulation of the law, some industrialists called upon legal advice to guide their actions. The owners of the P. Dumortier Frères factory in Tourcoing drafted the council of four lawyers from Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing during the *affaire des sacs*.¹³¹ They were consulted in particular on the legality of allowing workers to turn corn into flour and load it onto canal boats. The industrialists had previously not permitted this,¹³² in response to their workers refusing to carry out the task.¹³³ Upon being asked again to authorise this work, lawyers suggested that doing so and even giving the Germans their maximum requisition demand would be acceptable from a legal-patriotic viewpoint, because it would also provide food for the rest for the *occupés*, and prevented the Germans from requisitioning the entire stock.¹³⁴ It was believed that the Germans would allow Dumortier Frères to keep 25% of its stock in return for co-operation. Despite this advice, the industrialists still asked the mayor to confirm if, in these conditions, 'notre

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, P. Dumortier Frères to Maîtres Leroux, Chattelyn, and Delemer, 22nd June 1915. For further information see *ibid.*, P. Dumortier Frères to M. Vuylstèke, Tourcoing, 12th July 1915.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 'Consultation de M. Joseph Leroux,' 6th July 1915.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, P. Dumortier Frères to lieutenant Schilling de l'Administration des Affaires civiles à Roubaix, 24th June 1915.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, P. Dumortier Frères to M. Vuylstèke, Tourcoing, 12th July 1915; 'Consultation de M. Joseph Leroux,' 6th July 1915.

travail [...] ne constituerait pas un crime contre la Patrie et ne saurait nous être reproché.¹³⁵ It is unclear if the mayor agreed with this view.

However, former *bâtonnier* Eugène Delemer repeated the logic he had used to advise *Roubaisien* industrialists on the legality of making sandbags: ‘dans ce cas, vous ne vous exposeriez à aucune responsabilité pénale ou autre, cela parce que [...] il n’y a ni crime ni délit là où il n’y a pas volonté, et il n’y a pas de volonté [sic] lorsqu’on agit sous l’empire [sic] de la contrainte.’¹³⁶ For Delemer, then, authorising the manufacture of sandbags and other goods for the enemy was acceptable if it was done under the threat of force. But what about doing so freely? Even in this hypothesis, Delemer argued, for Dumortier Frères, ‘il n’y aurait pas culpabilité’ because the *code pénal* only punished treason, comprising providing the enemy with goods with the express aim of helping ‘ses entreprises’ or ‘servir ses desseins’ – ‘or, rien de pareil évidemment, ne pourrait jamais vous être [sic] imputé.’ Further, the *code* only concerned goods, whereas the owners would be providing *labour* – the corn had already been requisitioned, therefore no longer belonged to the owners.¹³⁷ Providing labour was thus not the same as directly furnishing goods. However, Delemer concluded that ‘Si nous nous plaçons au point de vue moral et patriotiques, ou simplement de l’opinion publique, il n’est pas douteux un seul instant qu’il vaille mieux s’abstenir, à moins d’en être [sic] réduit à ne pouvoir se dérober.’¹³⁸

The law therefore did not always favour all-out resistance. It was not just industrialists who sought legal advice; throughout the occupation, two professors of international law¹³⁹ provided the mayor of Lille with a legal perspective on potential actions, at his request.¹⁴⁰ The collection of letters between the mayor, the Germans, and these experts

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, P. Dumortier Frères to mayor of Tourcoing, 5th July 1915.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, Eugène Delemer to P. Dumortier Frères, 23rd June 1915.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ M. Louis Seloosse, avec le concours de M. Jacquy, *Guerre de 1914-1918: Occupation de Lille par les Allemands – Consultations données à la Mairie de Lille* (Paris, 1927); originals in ADN 9 R205-6.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, mayor to M. Seloosse, 2nd November 1914, p.5.

constitutes compelling evidence for respectable, legal protest. These jurists concluded during the *affaire des sacs* that any work aiding the manufacture of sandbags constituted participating in operations against their own country. Sandbags, they argued, were *the* crucial aspect of the war, and participation in their manufacture could conceivably count as *intelligence avec l'ennemi*.¹⁴¹ Other issues were more complicated, such as furnishing goods to the Germans, the municipality's responsibility in paying unemployment or other benefits, and the requisition of *occupés*.¹⁴² The mayor's respectable protests, many of which contained a legal aspect, were greatly informed by this advice – for instance, the refusal to pay a new war contribution in June 1916, understood as contrary to international law.¹⁴³ This legal resistance served as an example for other communes, such as Cambrai, where administrators did not have access to legal council.¹⁴⁴

Beyond the Hague Convention

When *occupés* were involved, whether voluntarily or forced, with even more explicit military tasks like digging trenches, local notables and the acting Prefect unsurprisingly echoed earlier protests, again drawing on article 52.¹⁴⁵ Article 46 of the Hague Convention was also invoked. This article protected 'Family honour and rights, the lives of persons, and private property.'¹⁴⁶ Understandably, notables like Anjubault referenced article 46 when protesting against the Easter 1916 *enlèvements*. For him, 'Ce serait faillir à mon devoir que de ne pas m'élever formellement contre une semblable décision, de nature à ajouter aux souffrances de la population la plus cruelle des douleurs morales,

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 'Consultation en réponse aux lettres municipales des 25 et 26 juin 1915 sur certaines réquisitions exercées par l'Autorité Allemande,' 28th June 1915, p.21-32, especially 24 and 27. For more on the *affaire des sacs*, see pp.13-32.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, *passim*.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 'Juin 1916 Contribution de Guerre: Diverses notes,' pp.48-53, especially 50; 'Janvier 1917: Consultation au sujet de la Maison Miele,' pp.54-61; Deperchin and van Ypersele, 'Droit,' p.166-8.

¹⁴⁴ Deperchin and van Ypersele, 'Droit,' p.167-8.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, ADN 9R841: Anjubault to Kommandant of Lille, 26th October 1916, 16th November, 18th December 1916; 18th June 1917.

¹⁴⁶ Annexe to the Hague Convention, section III, article 46.

celle que peut causer la destruction du foyer familial.¹⁴⁷ These events in particular, but also later deportations, sparked outrage across the occupied area and beyond; in the Nord many mayors and other notables provided a chorus of protests referencing article 46.¹⁴⁸

Françoise Thébaud suggests that such protests along with worldwide outrage, especially by the King of Spain, led to the cessation of deportations in November 1916.¹⁴⁹ In these and other protests, French notables often referenced the Germans' own rules of warfare. For example, the mayor and *députés* of Tourcoing argued that 'de pareilles mesures non seulement heurteraient les données les plus élémentaires du droit des gens, mais aussi seraient en contradiction flagrante avec tous les principes proclamés par l'Etat-major allemand lui-même dans son "Exposé des lois de la guerre".' This document stated that civilians in an occupied area should not be considered as enemies in the active sense of the word; for the authors of this protest, the German policy of deportation 'ressemblerait à des actes de guerre contre une population civile paisible.'¹⁵⁰ Other claims of German contradiction and hypocrisy abound.¹⁵¹

Invocations of international law lasted throughout the occupation. As late as January 1918, Anjubault protested against the taking of hostages in Habourdin following the killing of a German soldier by an *occupé* who subsequently committed suicide. He noted that this was an individual act, and if the author had still been alive, he would have

¹⁴⁷ ADN 9R841: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 17th April 1916.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example: *ibid.*, 18th December 1916 and 18th June 1917; AMT H4A39: mayor of Tourcoing and regional *députés*, to Kommandant, 17th April 1916; letters in ADN 74J223 sent from occupied to unoccupied France mentioning the protests of the mayor and Bishop of Lille, and mayors of Tourcoing and Roubaix; Cnudde-Lecointre, 'Monseigneur Charost,' p.364; idem, 'L'Eglise,' p.61; Nivet, 'Femmes,' p.85-6; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Germany's Violations*, p.15-16; Basdevant, *Déportations*, p.10-12.

¹⁴⁹ Thébaud, *Femme*, p.87.

¹⁵⁰ AMT H4A39: mayor of Tourcoing and *députés* Delory, Ghesquières, Inghels and Ragheboom, to Kommandant, 17th April 1916.

¹⁵¹ See, for example, ADN 9R841: Delory, Ghesquières and Inghels, to Kommandant of Lille, 17th October 1916; ADN 9R764: mayor of Wambrechies to Kommandant, 10th September 1916; Selosse and Jacquey, *Consultations*, 'Consultation en réponse aux lettres municipales des 25 et 26 juin 1915 sur certaines réquisitions exercées par l'Autorité Allemande,' p.21-2.

been punished as an individual. Further, the use of collective punishment was forbidden by article 50 of the Hague Convention.¹⁵² He asked that the hostages be released, and three days later they were liberated.¹⁵³ It is not clear if this was a direct result of Anjubault's protests, and it must be noted that he had made similar protests two years previous,¹⁵⁴ so the Germans evidently did not agree with the juridical point.

Sometimes notables invoked breaches of the 1906 Geneva Convention.¹⁵⁵ Others protested against German policies using *French* law, which was theoretically guaranteed to exist in the occupied territory under article 43 of the Hague Convention.¹⁵⁶ Notables therefore often refused German demands because they broke French law, or because under the Third Republic notables did not possess the powers to carry out these demands. In December 1916, the *Inspecteur de l'Assistance publique* informed the Prefect that he could not send an orphan to work for the Germans, as per their demands, because French law only allowed orphans to be housed with people who had undergone serious scrutiny, and who could assure the material and moral well-being of the child. The German authority did not meet these criteria!¹⁵⁷ The Inspector was frequently arrested for his numerous acts of respectable resistance,¹⁵⁸ and his predecessor had also been arrested for refusing to force the *pupilles* to work for the Germans, a refusal which the Prefect saw as just.¹⁵⁹

In another instance, the *Inspecteur primaire* of Cambrai was imprisoned for refusing to allow the German officer charged with the surveillance of schools to accompany him in his visits – because French law forbade entry into the schools for persons other than those

¹⁵² ADN 9R515: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 5th January 1918.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, a handwritten note on the above letter states that the hostages were released on 8th January 1918.

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, ADN 9R715: Anjubault to Haut Commandant de la 6^{ème} armée, 13th January 1916.

¹⁵⁵ ADN 9R220: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 7th August 1917.

¹⁵⁶ Annex to the Hague Convention, section III, article 43.

¹⁵⁷ ADN 9R253: Inspecteur de l'Assistance publique du Nord to Anjubault, 19th December 1916.

¹⁵⁸ See for, example, ADN 9R253: 'Affaire du pupille Claeys, Jules – Réquisition de services,' 22nd October 1917 note; ADN 9R254: Copie certifiée conforme of the ordonnance of von Graevenitz, 22nd October 1917; ADN 9R251: von Kern, for the Kommandant, to Prefect, 29th November 1916.

¹⁵⁹ ADN 9R374: Anjubault to Kommandantur of Lille, 14th May 1915.

designated in a law of October 1886.¹⁶⁰ As a fellow teacher noted, the Inspector ‘s’est trouvé dans la pénible alternative ou de transgresser la loi française ou de désobéir à l’autorité occupante. Comme il est toujours français, je présume qu’il a estimé son devoir était d’obéir aux lois de son pays.’¹⁶¹ A similar tone was taken by the guards at the prison of Loos, who refused to carry out manual work for the Germans in March 1917;¹⁶² they were punished with forced labour, which the director of the prison saw as an affront to their dignity as French functionaries.¹⁶³

Again, the Germans attempted to persuade notables that they did not have to fear negative judgement for breaking French laws. In January 1916, Anjubault was ordered to incarcerate a 13 year-old boy and a 14 year-old girl in the *Colonie industrielle de Saint-Bernard*. He responded that this was an establishment exclusively for males, and that a Prefect cannot order an incarceration – to do so would be an abuse of power for which he would be held personally responsible.¹⁶⁴ Von Graevenitz accepted the point concerning the girl, but re-stated the order regarding the boy, whilst reassuring Anjubault’s conscience:

La Préfecture est suffisamment couverte par cet ordre, à l’égard de l’autorité qui est placée au-dessus d’elle, si elle devait peut-être craindre qu’il puisse lui être fait plus tard des reproches, parce qu’elle a pris, en temps de guerre, une mesure qui avait pour but d’empêcher qu’un jeune français [sic], sans parents, reste sans aucune préservation.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ ADN 9R313: Extrait d’un rapport de Melle Ballon, Inspectrice des Ecoles à Valenciennes. Arrestation de M. Desseaint, Inspecteur primaire à Cambrai. Valenciennes, 20th July 1918.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² ADN 9R359: Directeur of Maison Centrale de Loos to Kommandant of Loos, 16th March 1917.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* For more on Loos prison, see Deperchin, ‘Un établissement pénitentiaire,’ and ADN 9R357-360.

¹⁶⁴ ADN 9R377: Anjubault to Police militaire, Lille, 18th January 1916.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, von Graevenitz to Prefecture, 21st January 1916.

In any case, the director of the *Colonie* refused the German demand, citing article 66 of the *code pénal*. However, he later admitted that ‘Malgré mes protestations énergiques, j’ai dû céder d’accepter cet enfant.’¹⁶⁶

Many similar cases occurred.¹⁶⁷ The latest example, a demonstration of how little the strategy of respectable resistance changed, was a letter from Anjubault to the *Kommandantur* in September 1918. The Germans had demanded that money gained from the harvest be used to pay the workers of Sequedin. Anjubault replied that such a decision was beyond the authority of the Prefect, because the money belonged to the individuals whose harvest had been requisitioned.¹⁶⁸ Years of vain invocations of such logic does not seem to have dissuaded Anjubault from maintaining his respectable resistance.

Religious Protests?

Clergymen played their own role in respectable resistance, perhaps most famously the *doyen de Saint-Christophe* of Tourcoing, who engaged in a different form of opposition in August 1916. Rather than protesting to the Germans, he instead preached resistance to German requisitions (particularly of copper),¹⁶⁹ for which he was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment in Germany. This was a widely-known event both during and after the occupation,¹⁷⁰ representative of the few occasions of non-protest notable resistance.¹⁷¹ However, the *doyen* had engaged in notable protests earlier that year, criticising the

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Directeur de la Colonie industrielle de St-Bernard to Prefect, 3rd February 1916.

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, ADN 9R715: mayor of Roncq to Kommandant, 23rd August 1916; AMT H4A28: mayor of Tourcoing to Kommandant, 1st March 1916.

¹⁶⁸ ADN 9R741: Prefecture to Kommandantur of Lille, 10th September 1918.

¹⁶⁹ ADN J 1772: Avis de M. le chanoine Leclercq à ses paroissiens, 13th August 1916.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, ADN 9R746: German poster, Tourcoing, 19th August 1916; J1933: Rouesel manuscript, ‘Réquisition des cuivres et bronzes chez les particuliers [19/9/1916],’ p.2; ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 20th August 1916; Mauclère, *L’Orage*, p.48-9; Cluquenois-Pâque, *Lille*, p.247-8.

¹⁷¹ Such as the fabrication of false ID cards by employees of the *mairie* of Lille. ADN 74J241: Dumont papers, 29th October 1916.

Easter 1916 *enlèvements*.¹⁷² Further, there existed cases of clergymen resisting German demands, such as refusing to ring the church bells for alleged German victories,¹⁷³ or to allow the Germans to requisition bells.¹⁷⁴

Higher up the ecclesiastical hierarchy, bishops utilised the same protest tactics as other notables. The bishop of Lille, Mgr Charost, was especially vocal, aiming to protect the Church, its goods, and fellow Christians.¹⁷⁵ He often directed the Germans' attention towards individual cases of arrested *occupés*, asking for leniency.¹⁷⁶ Further, Charost protested against the deportations of 1916,¹⁷⁷ and against requisitions of church material such as bells,¹⁷⁸ or of clergymen.¹⁷⁹ He criticised requisitions of industrial and other material whose disappearance would endanger the economic prosperity of the Nord.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, whilst the *doyen de St-Christophe* preached open resistance to the requisition of copper, Charost protested in a letter to the *Kommandant* of Lille. He highlighted the 'caractère infiniment respectable' of the reasons leading the population to refuse the German demand for copper. The letter concluded:

De quel front oseraient-ils penser aux morts et soutenir demain le regard des survivants s'ils faisaient ou annonçaient la livraison des engins de guerre qui les décimeront.

Je me suis borné à représenter exactement l'état d'âme public. J'ai l'espoir que cette situation, méritant au plus haut point d'être prise en considération, orientera l'autorité allemande vers une solution qui sauve la

¹⁷² AMT H4A39: le doyen de St.Christophe and le doyen de Notre Dame, 'pour tout le clergé de Tourcoing,' to Kommandant von Tessin of Tourcoing, 10th April 1916.

¹⁷³ See, for example, ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 19th December 1914.

¹⁷⁴ Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitière diary, 6th March 1917, p.209.

¹⁷⁵ Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.60; *idem*, 'Monseigneur Charost,' p.365.

¹⁷⁶ See ADN 9R556: 'Extrait des Procès-verbaux de la Commandanture de Lille,' 8th November and 31st December 1914, 2nd and 16th January 1915; ADN 9R557: 'Extrait des Procès-verbaux de la Commandanture de Lille,' 30th January 1915.

¹⁷⁷ See letters in ADN 74J223: letter sent from London, 21st June 1916 (n.a.), containing an attached letter sent on 9th May 1916, addressed to Mlle Delomel, Calais, by X, from Lille; Cnudde-Lecointre, 'Monseigneur Charost,' p.364; *idem*, 'L'Eglise,' p.61.

¹⁷⁸ Cliquennois-Pâque, *Lille*, p.293.

¹⁷⁹ Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.58-60.

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, *ibid.*, p.61; *idem*, 'Monseigneur Charost,' p.365.

conscience et l'honneur d'un peuple à qui il ne restera bientôt plus que cela.¹⁸¹

This was another polite but firm protest. Yet this resistance was not based on loyalty to the Republic. Charost held the view that the war and especially the occupation was a test from God in response to the sins of the Republic,¹⁸² although he remained staunchly pro-France,¹⁸³ evoking victory in his pastoral letters and sermons, much to the ire of the Germans.¹⁸⁴

Similarly, the bishop of Cambrai, Mgr Chollet, preached a patriotic message which strengthened the morale of the population,¹⁸⁵ although his attitude of 'resistance' has been questioned. Eric Bukowski argues that he continued the pre-war 'bataille religieuse' and used the occupation as a means of accentuating his role in the town.¹⁸⁶ Bukowski notes that Chollet's actions alternated between compromise with and resistance to the occupier, but concludes that Chollet did engaged in resistance via personal protests to the Germans, or including his name on the municipal protests.¹⁸⁷ Religious notables therefore also engaged in respectable resistance,¹⁸⁸ although not all clergymen confined themselves to notable protests.¹⁸⁹

Despite differing political views, Catholic forms of resistance were, overall, not too dissimilar to Republican forms – both expressed patriotism and a faith in the Allied or

¹⁸¹ Charost to von Graevenitz, n.d., cited in Cliquennois-Pâque, *Lille*, p.246-7.

¹⁸² Voeux pour la nouvelle année présentés à l'archevêque le 30 décembre 1915, Archives Diocésaines, cited in Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.43.

¹⁸³ See AMT H4A28: 'Lettre de S.G. Mgr. l'Evêque de Lille prescrivant une Neuvaine de prières publiques pour la clôture du Temps Pascal,' n.d.

¹⁸⁴ ADN 9R585: Commissaire Central de Police of Lille to Prefect, 28th Oct 1916; Cnudde-Lecointre, 'Monseigneur Charost,' p.363.

¹⁸⁵ ADHS 4M513: report n°711, 9th February 1917.

¹⁸⁶ Bukowski, 'Cambrai,' p.63.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.63-4.

¹⁸⁸ Martin-Mamy sees the two as part of the same phenomenon: his work contains an appendix entitled 'Les protestations des autorités civiles et religieuses.' Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, pp.186-255.

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.59; ADHS 4M513: report n°1074, 21st March 1917.

French victory, no matter what 'France' meant to them. Both drew on shared notions of respectability and social norms so important to *Nordistes*, whether Catholic or not; and everyone desired Allied victory as the short-term goal.

Resistance Restrained: Punishments and Successes

How successful was respectable resistance? If 'success' means the withdrawal or softening of policies against which notables protested, or the general amelioration of occupied life, then its success was questionable. Despite the respectable nature of protests, the Germans were frequently frustrated by them, perceiving them as performative nuisances, 'freinage administratif' or full-blown resistance. Such frustration usually resulted in the threat of further fines or punishments for the notables, municipality and the population.¹⁹⁰ If resistance continued, punishments were applied.

Occasionally letters of protest unequivocally exacerbated the situation. For example, on 19th May 1917, the *Directeur des Musées et de l'Ecole Nationale des Arts industriels* wrote a letter to the *Kommandant* of Roubaix, protesting against the requisitioning of teaching material and quoting the Hague Convention. The furious *Kommandant* came to the school immediately after receiving the letter, screaming insults at the *Directeur*, after which everything imaginable was requisitioned, instead of the more limited planned requisitions.¹⁹¹ Other notable protests often led to *increased* fines and punishments,¹⁹² although many notables were suspected of some form of opposition to the Germans throughout the occupation, whether justified or not.¹⁹³ Another German response was simply to refuse further communication on the subject.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ ADN 9R515: Kommandant of Hellemmes to mayor, 24th October 1916.

¹⁹¹ ADN 9R734: report, n.a. (probably the interim headteacher) to Prefect, n.d. (sometime after 20th May 1917).

¹⁹² See, for example, ADN 9R515: von Carlowitz, Gen. Commandant en Chef, seemingly to Mairie of Hellemmes, 1st November 1917; Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.162, 345, 353-5, 457-8.

¹⁹³ See ADN 9R797: handwritten note, n.a., n.d.

¹⁹⁴ ADN 9R253: Von Graevenitz to Prefecture of Lille, 24th December 1916.

M. Welhoff, a notable working at the *Recette Municipale* of Lille, refused in July 1915 to hand over the keys to the safe to allow the Germans to take 375,000 francs required for the manufacture of sandbags. He continued his refusal, even when imprisoned, and eventually the Germans simply broke into the safe themselves.¹⁹⁵ He must have known that this was a probable outcome, yet he maintained his resistance, presumably feeling that it was his duty, or hoping that this would delay the Germans (it did, for a day). Here, resistance failed in one sense (the Germans still accessed the money), but succeeded in others (a slight delay occurred, and Welhoff never acquiesced). It is also interesting that the Germans sought co-operation, rather than commencing with brute force.

Sometimes official protests did bear fruit, such as in late July 1918, when the *Procureur de la République* secured the release of one of two French policemen accused of exceeding their limitations in investigating a criminal case.¹⁹⁶ Judging each instance of resistance on a case-by-case basis proves impossible given the lacunae in the archives, but examples of wholly successful resistance are considerably rarer than those of failed resistance. Even notable protests which initially had a favourable conclusion eventually ended with accusations of resistance and the threat of punishment. The theatre of Lille provides a case study. In November 1915, the Germans ordered that the municipality had to facilitate the building works needed to complete the theatre, including providing information.¹⁹⁷ The mayor opposed this, explaining that the municipality had existing contracts with entrepreneurs, many of whom were living in Paris. He concluded:

Nous avons témoigné la meilleure volonté à exécuter vos ordres pour tous les travaux concernant les besoins de l'armée allemande [...]

La preuve en est dans l'exécution de plus de 3.000 ordres donnés par vous [...]

Mais, nous n'avons pas le droit d'aller plus loin, et vous ne voudriez pas exiger de nous qu'à l'heure où notre population souffre de

¹⁹⁵ Cliquennois-Pâque, *Lille*, pp.136-42, 'Procès-verbal des incidents qui se sont produits à la Recette municipale les 5 et 6 juillet 1915.'

¹⁹⁶ ADN 9R220: Procureur de la République à Lille to von Graevenitz, 29th July 1918; von Gravenitz to Procureur, 31st July 1918.

¹⁹⁷ ADN 9R635: von Graevenitz to Mairie of Lille, 8th November 1915.

tant de besoins que nous ne pouvons satisfaire, où nos ressources ne suffisent pas à atténuer de profondes misères, nous dépensions d'importantes sommes d'argent pour des œuvres de luxe et de plaisir.¹⁹⁸

Three days later, the Governor informed the mayor that 'En raison de la demande que vous m'avez faite personnellement [...] et de votre lettre [...] je renonce pour le moment à faire terminer les travaux du Nouveau Théâtre par des ouvriers de la Ville.' However, he reserved the right 'de faire achever ces travaux par des soldats' if the town did not fulfil its promise of installing heating in the old theatre by 20th November.¹⁹⁹ This resistance thus seemed successful. Yet within a month an unknown incident had taken place which caused the Governor to insinuate that municipal employees had refused to give him the plans, incorrectly stating that these plans were in Paris. He alleged a specific employee had lied more than others, and ended by stating:

Cet incident m'engage à exprimer à nouveau mon opinion que la Municipalité pourrait s'épargner à elle-même et à ses concitoyens beaucoup de désagréments, si elle imposait comme devoir à ses employés subalternes d'abandonner cette résistance passive qui paraît si souvent dans leurs relations avec les autorités allemandes. L'expérience aurait dû montrer à l'Administration de la Ville qu'une pareille résistance est tout de même sans résultat et que les autorités allemandes ne se laissent pas pour cela détourner de la poursuite de leur but.²⁰⁰

Many notables would probably have agreed with the final sentence. Most acknowledged their subordinate position and the ultimate futility of resistance. Pierre Dumont, interpreter at the *mairie* of Lille said as much in his diary:

On est décidé à la résistance, au risque de passer de mauvais jours, et... de céder [sic] ensuite. On consulte des ouvrages de Droit International, on adresse des réclamations au Gouverneur, mais la conclusion est invariable: "payez... sinon...!"

C'est le culte du pot de fer contre le pot de terre; et pourtant il faut résister, par principe. Pendant des semaines il y aura échange de longues lettres, on luttera le plus longtemps possible jusqu'au moment où

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, mayor of Lille to von Graevenitz, 8th November 1915.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, von Heinrich to mayor of Lille, 11th November 1915. The change of Governor is curious.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, von Graevenitz to mayor of Lille, 13th December 1915.

l'autorité allemande dira: "En voilà assez, payez sinon...(suivra [sic] la liste de mesures de rigueur.)"²⁰¹

This sums up both the nature of and logic behind respectable resistance. Other notables reinforced such a view. Yet more references exist of the ultimate uselessness, vanity and futility of resistance.²⁰² By the publication of Gromaire's work in 1925, the fruitlessness of resistance during the occupation was widely accepted.²⁰³

It is probable that, given the large amount of paperwork comprising respectable resistance and the Germans' response, resistance as 'freinage administratif' was mildly successful. Overall, though, the pragmatic results of notable protests were limited. Yet *occupés* were aware of notable resistance, so perhaps it was successful in a morale-boosting sense.²⁰⁴ The population may have felt pride and a sense of optimism as a result of such resistance. The population itself, however, was also engaged in its own resistance with similar morale-boosting effects. It is to this symbolic resistance that this thesis now turns.

²⁰¹ ADN 74J241: Dumont papers, 19th June 1916.

²⁰² See, for example, ADN 9R707: functionaries of Loos (n.a.), typewritten note, n.d., to 'Monsieur' (possibly the Prefect); ADN 9R584: report, seemingly by the Commissaire de Police of Lille, 12th November 1918; 9R377: Directeur de la colonie de St Bernard to Prefect, 4th February 1916; ADN 9R374: L'économe de la colonie de St Bernard, ffons Directeur, to Prefect, 11th May 1915.

²⁰³ Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.14-15, 56, 164, 167-8, 214.

²⁰⁴ Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.61.

II – Symbolic Resistance (*Coups de cœur*)

The wider population engaged in acts of symbolic patriotism constituting a different form of resistance. This ‘symbolic resistance,’¹ ‘moral opposition,’ or ‘religion patriotique’² demonstrated both the population’s loyalty to France and/or the Republic, and its refusal to be subdued by the Germans. Perhaps the widespread patriotism of the *occupés* studied here was a marker of the Third Republic’s success in fostering and promoting national identity and ‘civic nationalism,’³ if not always allegiance to the Republic. In the heavily Catholic but economically developed Nord, the policy of Catholic *ralliement* to the Republic was largely successful.⁴ The female composition of the occupied population does not dissuade from this, as the Republic had also been inculcating its daughters with a unique form of patriotism, even preparing them for wartime duties.⁵ However, even anti-Republican, Catholic education had taught that France was great,⁶ fostering its own kind of loyalty to the *patrie*. Patriotism may also be explained by the *Union Sacrée* informing the French civilian *culture de guerre*, which reached and influenced the population of the Nord before the occupation. Once invaded, the French saw the *patrie* as violated; none more so than the *occupés*, who experienced this first-hand. Yet ‘passive resistance’ and open (non-violent) hostility to the Germans was not unique to occupied France in 1914-18,⁷ thus the circumstances of war and occupation evidently constituted important causal factors. Sometimes cases of

¹ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.253.

² De Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.122.

³ See, for example, Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, 1976), p.304; Antoine Prost, *Republican Identities in War and Peace: Representations of France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford, 2002), (trans.) Jay Winter and Helen McPhail, p.75-6; Raoul Girardet (ed.), *Le Nationalisme français, 1871-1914* (Besançon, 1970), pp.73-83; Michael Ignatieff, ‘Benign Nationalism? The Possibility of the Civic Ideal,’ in *People, Nation and State: The Meaning of Ethnicity and Nationalism* (1999), (eds.) Edward Mortimer and Robert Fine, p.142; Margaret H. Darrow, ‘In the Land of Joan of Arc: The Civic Education of Girls and the Prospect of War in France, 1871–1914,’ *French Historical Studies*, 31:2 (Spring 2008).

⁴ Robert Gildea, *France 1870-1914* (London, 1996), p.44.

⁵ See Darrow, ‘Joan of Arc.’

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.273.

⁷ See, for example, Mayerhofer, ‘Making Friends,’ p.122-3.

‘everyday resistance’⁸ existed, subversive acts carried out by a subordinated population, not necessarily patriotic *per se*. Yet the resistance examined here often had a performative, symbolic element, whether ‘everyday resistance’ or something different.

‘Symbolic resistance’ here comprises a variety of acts attesting to the patriotism of the *occupés*, and consequently nearly all banned by the Germans. The disparate actions studied include singing songs, writing poems, telling jokes or using humour to mock the occupation and occupier. Other actions examined are wearing or displaying national colours, demonstrating humanitarian impulses towards Allied prisoners of war, and preventing successful German requisitions.⁹ Many such actions have an explicitly performative element to them, and are more ‘passive’ than ‘active’ resistance – nevertheless, engaging in such activities usually contradicted German regulations, thus was recognised by the Germans (at least) as a form of resistance.

The intent behind these acts, difficult to discern, rarely appears to have been to resist the Germans in any pragmatic sense. Mostly, it was simply a desire to express patriotism, but in doing so to resist moral-cultural domination and humiliation by the Germans. Indeed, the population’s patriotism was so strong that some found any sign of German culture humiliating and insulting. Trollin described the opening of Lille’s theatre as a ‘Suprême insulte!!’¹⁰ After seeing the replacement of the French flag with the German one at the *hôtel de ville* – a commonplace policy¹¹ – Blin remarked, ‘Ô honte!’¹² Furthermore, many Catholics perceived the presence of Protestant Prussians in their

⁸ Scott, ‘Resistance without Protest,’ p.419. He originally outlined the concept in *Weapons*.

⁹ These constitute resistance in Robert Gildea et al., ‘Introduction,’ *Surviving Hitler*, p.11.

¹⁰ ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 25th December 1915. Original emphasis.

¹¹ See Ramirez, ‘Les villes,’ p.11; Isabelle Dejardin, ‘Tourcoing pendant la Première Guerre mondiale: une ville occupée (1914-1918),’ mémoire de maîtrise sous la direction de R. Vandenbussche (Lille III, 1995), p.11-12; Trenard, *Cambrai*, p.259; Cottel, *Wallers*, p.19.

¹² ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 18th October 1914.

churches as a profanation – not only did Protestant mass take place here, but sometimes churches became barracks.¹³

Some may have wished to express pro-French or pro-Allied sentiments precisely because of German orders to the contrary, demonstrating freedom of expression and thought in opposition to German control. Once the population had become ‘prisonners,’ as Trollin put it,¹⁴ acts of rebellion kept morale high by undermining the gaolers’ power.

For Becker, ‘Ces petits actes patriotiques au jour le jour sont symptomatiques [...] d’une volonté sans faille de montrer son refus de l’ordre allemand [...]’¹⁵ The German order was one society, but a parallel, French, rebel society existed,¹⁶ one of ‘résistance civile au quotidien chez les anonymes’ involving thousands of ‘petits gestes aussi anodins’ such as crossing the road to avoid a German.¹⁷

Symbolic resistance was therefore a means of undermining the Germans presence, perhaps also of surviving the occupation with some dignity intact. What specific forms, then, did symbolic resistance take?

Humour

Numerous sources attest to the French population’s strong sense of humour during the occupation. This was perhaps merely a form of dealing with a difficult situation, but as with the occupations of World War II, it could also be resistance.¹⁸ Just as Chad Bryant has demonstrated for the Czech Protectorate in Word War II, in the occupied Nord of 1914-18 jokes constituted a particular form of resistance against a regime that demanded

¹³ ADN 15J87: Memoirs of Momal, chapters VII-VII, and XII.

¹⁴ ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 25th October 1915.

¹⁵ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.254.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.256.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.254-5.

¹⁸ Bryant, ‘Language’; Becker, *Oubliés*, p.77.

total conformity and obedience.¹⁹ Ambiguous jokes provided a safer form of opposition.²⁰ However, Bryant outlines the problems and multiple meanings jokes offer:

The motivations and intentions in telling a joke might have been selfish. Joke-telling might have acted as a 'safety valve', a harmless vent that allowed Czechs to continue working in factories while maintaining a vague sense of patriotism and integrity. Other jokesters might have had little or no regard for the fate of the national collective [...] we might see such acts of 'resistance' as small, personal and calculated victories – opportunities seized at a moment in time. Then the victory disappeared.²¹

This model is equally applicable to the occupied Nord. The use of humour also allowed the *occupés* 'to make sense of an absurd world, or at least laugh it away for a few seconds.'²² Some contest the notion of humour as resistance, particularly regarding the occupation of 1940-44, but admit nevertheless that jokes could be subversive forms of opposition and irreverence.²³ Humour provides a covert outlet for opposition by the oppressed,²⁴ yet also suggests passivity, an admission that little can be done to alter the situation in any meaningful way. This does not mean that oppressed peoples are the only constituencies expressing humour: the Germans also did so, such as in cartoons and jokes published in *Liller Kriegszeitung*, often linked to notions of cultural superiority (see Fig. 8). The *occupés* similarly expressed their cultural identity through humour, and in this sense resisted the German presence.

Occupation diarists provide the richest source base for jokes and humour. Diaries themselves have been perceived as an act of resistance.²⁵ Indeed, it was forbidden to possess 'écrits hostiles à l'Allemagne',²⁶ which diaries could conceivably represent; some

¹⁹ Bryant, 'Language,' p.136.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.140.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.148.

²² *Ibid.*, p.149.

²³ Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.282-3.

²⁴ Hollander and Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing,' p.540.

²⁵ Smith et al., *France*, p.45; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.110; Mme Deherripont's diary, cited in Becker, *Oubliés*, p.20.

²⁶ ADN 9R717: German poster, 12th February 1916.

were punished for committing this offence,²⁷ and for possessing diaries.²⁸ The RAF later attested to the difficulty of keeping diaries and the ingenuity required to hide them during the occupation.²⁹ Here, the understanding of diaries as resistance is not as extreme as that of Becker, who even sees resistance in the grammar and syntax of diarists.³⁰ It is not necessary to read between the lines to see resistance in diaries, primarily visible in jokes.

Trollin chronicled anecdotes and jokes, but these appear only until mid-1915. He noted in January 1915 that at Ronchin a German asked a child why he was not at school, to which the child replied, ‘Why are you not in Paris?’³¹ He recounts a similar incident in April 1915: some children were playing soldiers, performing marches, when a German officer passed by, complimenting them. One of the children told the officer ‘N[ou]s savons faire aussi le pas de Paris.’ The officer told them to do so, and the boy marched backwards, at which point ‘L’officier n’ajoute rien et s’en va.’³² Perhaps this rather triumphalist humour, underlining the Germans’ failure at the Marne and their inability to advance since, had died down past 1915. Nevertheless, it represents resistance to the notion of German superiority and victory.

There was an animal-based mockery of the Germans. One joke recounted a German officer telling an *Alsacien-Lorrain*, a civilian living in the Nord with whom he lodged, to serve him the best meal he had. The *Alsacien* served up a dish of milk in which potatoes were floating. “Qu’est-ce que cette bouillie?” asked the officer, “chez n[ou]s on donne cela aux cochons.” The civilian responded: “Et chez nous aussi!”³³

²⁷ ADN 9R719: German poster, Roubaix, 5th February 1917.

²⁸ ADN 9R797: Commissaire Central de Tourcoing to Prefect, 8th December 1916.

²⁹ NA AIR 1/1212/204/5/2629: RAF Investigation Committee on bomb raids in France and Belgium (1919), introduction, p.2.

³⁰ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.112.

³¹ ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 30th January 1915.

³² *Ibid.*, 7th April 1915.

³³ *Ibid.*, 23rd April 1915.

A further porcine joke involved Germans requisitioning a farmer's pigs. He implored them to leave him at least one.

- Oui, à condition que v[ou]s le nommerez Joseph
- Ah! non; je ne veux pas déshonorer le saint
- Et puis, après tout, nommez-le Guillaume si v[ou]s voulez
- Encore moins, car je ne veux pas non plus déshonorer mon cochon.³⁴

Yet humour was not restricted to jokes. Mockery and laughter were a common reaction to German posters, policies, and parades. Englishman J.P. Whitaker's account of the occupation of Lille and Roubaix noted:

One of the dire threats announced on the posters over which we had many a quiet laugh, was: "Anyone guilty of this offence will be sent to Germany." If the authorities had only known it, this was not the best way to impress their serfs. Their remark was "*l'Allemagne doit être un pays terrible*".³⁵

Correspondingly, Trollin recounts how in March 1915, on the first day of a new curfew in Lille, 'c'est drôle; on rit d'une fenêtre à l'autre en se moquant.'³⁶ Following the German killing of carrier pigeons, Blin mixed humour with optimism, exclaiming: 'Les pigeons sont morts, mais non les canards!'³⁷ In Roubaix, when it was made compulsory to give an egg a day to the *Kommandantur* in 1915, 'On fit des chansons à la gloire des poules récalcitrantes et patriotes, qui se refusaient à pondre à la cadence requise.'³⁸ Perhaps humour was the inevitable result of a tragi-comic situation, whereby in this instance the Germans allegedly requested eggs from chickens of both sexes.³⁹ In Troisvilles, the population laughed at a German poster ordering the muzzling of cats.⁴⁰ Humour was thus a common response to the occupation.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18th May 1915.

³⁵ J. P. Whitaker, *Under the Heel*, p.57.

³⁶ ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 5-6th March 1915.

³⁷ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 3rd January 1915.

³⁸ Redier, *Allemands*, p.184. The song itself can be found in ADN 87J2: P. Couvreur, *A Propos de Bottes: Chansons d'Occupation* (Lille, 1919), p.32-34.

³⁹ Redier, *Allemands*, p.188.

⁴⁰ ADN 15J87: Memoirs of Momal, chapter XI.

Lillois Martin-Mamy's published occupation diary contains many amusing anecdotes. When he and others were taken hostage, they were ordered not to talk, so asked their guards if they could ask questions or say thank you.⁴¹ The hostages were 'Partagés entre une forte envie de rire, une profonde indignation et une certaine inquiétude.'⁴² A later comment is insightful: 'Il faut rendre à ses ennemis la justice qui leur est due. Les Allemands nous ont apporté ici l'humiliation, la misère, la faim, le vol et l'assassinat juridique; mais ils nous ont apporté aussi la gaieté. Pour des Français c'est un cadeau important.'⁴³ In particular, *Lillois* found German parades involving goose-stepping highly amusing: 'Amusés et narquois ils regardent et rient. Ils rient parce que le spectacle est d'un comique irrésistible, et puis ils rient encore, parce que d'avoir ri ils se sentent vengés.'⁴⁴ This sense of vengeance represents a cornerstone of the logic and intent behind occupation humour. Martin-Mamy wrote that German officers misinterpreted such laughter as German culture bearing fruit, believing the *Lillois* to be happy: 'Ils regardent et ne comprennent pas. On ne peut pas être un Barbare [sic] et comprendre l'Ironie [sic].'⁴⁵

Not all Germans were this naïve. French laughter was so common that a poster was put up in Lille forbidding laughter in front of posters.⁴⁶ Similarly, in Tourcoing, because clandestine publications (studied later) demonstrated that most announced German victories were false, every time a church bell rang for an alleged victory, the population laughed. The *Kommandatur* eventually banned the population from laughing in public altogether.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, p.36.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.37.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.165.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.165-6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.167.

⁴⁶ Redier, *Allemands*, p.136; Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.30.

⁴⁷ Maublère, *L'Orage*, p.96.

The widespread employment of humour betrays its almost cathartic, pro-survival properties. Redier notes: ‘On se moquait d’eux tant qu’on pouvait.’⁴⁸ Despite the harshness of the occupation, ‘Plutôt que d’en pleurer, mieux valait en rire.’⁴⁹ This logic was mirrored elsewhere: ‘We should have felt doubly prisoners if we had not made fun of our jailers, and to be prisoners only once was quite sufficient.’⁵⁰

Songs and Poems (Verse Versus the Germans)

Humour was also expressed in the songs and poems composed and performed during the occupation. Indeed, ‘Les chansons populaires de refus’ were ‘particulièrement vivaces dans le Nord.’⁵¹ Redier hints that singing was for those who could not engage in polite protests: ‘On chantait ou, si on pouvait on faisait mieux: on leur brûlait la politesse.’⁵² The content of songs and poems highlights their role as forms of resistance, similar to those of the Second World War.⁵³ Collections of such work were published after 1918, and provide the bulk of evidence for this section. Naturally, it is possible that some of these were edited or even fabricated entirely after the event. Yet they remain convincing enough to be used for informative analysis. Humour was not the only sentiment expressed, but it is the one which will be dealt with first. A *rapatrié* from Valenciennes noted in early 1917 that children performed a song, even in front of Germans, which directly spoke to, mocked, and criticised the Kaiser. The chorus was:

Par ton orgueil, ta lâcheté,
Tu fais verser du sang, des larmes,
Le monde entier est écoeuré
Et veut te passer par les armes;
C’est à Berlin que nous voulons
Venger nos pères et tous nos frères.
Prends garde Guillaume l’espion

⁴⁸ Redier, *Allemands*, p.136.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.144.

⁵⁰ Yerta sisters, *Six Women*, p.174.

⁵¹ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.256.

⁵² Redier, *Allemands*, p.148.

⁵³ See Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France*, pp.189-96; Ian Higgins (ed.), *Anthology of Second World War French Poetry* (Exeter, 1982); André Halimi, *Chantons sous l’Occupation* (Paris, 1976).

Pour tes Prussiens nous avons des Canons.⁵⁴

It is hard to imagine such violent lyrics being sung in front of Germans without negative consequences for the performer. Whether these children intended to resist, or recognised such acts as resistance, is unknown; this was probably the case, even if resisting simply meant expressing anti-German sentiment and/or annoying the Germans.

Most songs and poems were written in *ch'ti*. This suggests that the composers/singers believed they were engaging in resistance, or at least in dangerous activities. The use of a dialect that even Germans who spoke French would find hard to understand meant that *occupés* could display anti-German sentiment with a reduced possibility of discovery or reproach. The benefit of German non-comprehension combined with the strong sense of localism/regionalism to make *ch'ti* a useful language of resistance. In face of German cultural and military domination, *Nordiste* identity was reinforced – an identity that was not only ‘not German,’ but also regional and national at the same time. Further, texts in the primarily oral *patois* may have been easier, or more probable, to circulate amongst the Nord’s industrial and agricultural populations, likely to speak the *patois* on a regular basis. Given the lyrics of such works, it is clear that local and French identity here worked in unison.

Labbé composed and performed songs which aided the morale of the population – he ‘trouvait de soudaines inspirations pour rallier avec une intarissable verve la haute bouffonnerie dont l’attitude et l’allure des soldats allemands à Lille nous offraient journellement le spectacle.’⁵⁵ His song ‘Les All’mands à Lille’ provides further evidence that the population ridiculed German spectacles. In this instance, Labbé mocks the poor musical quality of the daily parade of the 39th Hanoverian *Landsturm* regiment. The refrain is unambiguous:

⁵⁴ ADHS 4M513: report n°744, 15th February 1917. The original text is located in ADN J1035/37 along with other occupation poems, suggesting this account is true.

⁵⁵ J. Chauleur, ‘Préface,’ in Labbé, *A la Guerre*, p.2.

L' Landsturm a
 L' Landsturm a
 Tant fait rire à Lille
 Qu' longtemps dins no' ville
 On s'in souven'ra.⁵⁶

A similar song entitled 'La parate' (the parade) explains that even the memory of *Landsturm* parades still made the French laugh after the occupation – but at the time, the population was crying with laughter.⁵⁷

German celebrations were thus prime targets for this resistance. A poem of 1915 mocked German victories:

Ils annonc'nt leus succès baroques.
 A nos églis's ils sonn'nt les cloques;
 Pour el fauss' gloriole i sont forts.⁵⁸

Labbé composed an irreverent ditty for the celebration of the Kaiser's birthday on 27th January 1915, seen from the perspective of two pigeons.⁵⁹ An anonymous *Lillois* author also wrote a song for the same occasion, based on 'L'Angelus de la mer.' The language of the second verse is evocative of the disdain, even hatred, some *occupés* felt towards the Germans and especially the Kaiser:

La déesse est garnie d'vos drapeaux germaniques
 Mais d'in haut les coulons
 Déposent din vos couleurs des p'tites crottes symboliques
 Cha rimplace les fleurons
 Comme ches oiseaux, tous les citoyens de Lille
 In font autant su l'portrait d'vot Kaiser
 Malédiction su' lui et tout s' famille

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8-9. The musical parade and Labbé's song itself were the subject of an article in *Le Temps*, 16th February 1915.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23-4.

⁵⁸ Mousseron, *Boches*, 'Les Insensés,' p.43.

⁵⁹ Labbé, *A la guerre*, p.61-2, song entitled 'A Guillaume II à l'occasion de s'n anniversaire, 27 Janvier 1915 – Souvenir des pigeons de l' Grand'Place de Lille.'

S'planche s'rot bien mieux à côté d' Lucifer.⁶⁰

Labbé called the Kaiser the Antichrist,⁶¹ and the view that the Kaiser was evil and responsible for the war was widespread during the occupation,⁶² representing the *culture de l'occupé* which dehumanised the 'barbaric' enemy without the aid of Allied propaganda. It was against such barbarity that the *occupés* resisted – by denouncing it in songs, a personal, moral victory was achieved.

Many more songs contained strong anti-German emotions. One recounts the requisition of goods, noting that all that remained was the Germans – 'cheull' peste' and 'chés rafleux prussiens' – and ultimately mocking German 'Kulture [sic].'⁶³ Another calls the Germans vampires and 'sales boches.'⁶⁴ Labbé often accused the Germans of lying, particularly via their posters and publications, as evident in the titles of the songs 'Minteux!... Minteux!... Minteux!...' and 'Mintiries Boches.'⁶⁵ This sentiment was echoed by a contemporary song not written by Labbé mocking 'Les Trois Canards' – *Le Bruxellois*, *La Gazette des Ardennes* and the *Bulletin de Lille*.⁶⁶

Ducks were not the only birds causing a stir. Stronger emotions are evident in poems concerning German orders to kill animals, seen by the *occupés* as the height of cruelty.⁶⁷ The obligatory killing of pigeons was perceived in one poem as 'L' massacre' des pigeons

⁶⁰ ADN J1699: 'Souvenir de l'fête anniversaire de l'Empereur Guillaume. L'Angélus du 75 (air de l'Angélus de la mer)' written by X in January 1915, within a handwritten notebook seemingly written during the occupation – n.d., n.a.

⁶¹ Labbé, *A la guerre*, p.27, 'Souv'nir de l' Messe de Pâques in l'Eglise Saint-Pierre Saint-Paul, à Lille, l' 4 Avril 1915, Pindant l'occupation All'mande.'

⁶² See, for example, ADHS 4M513: report n°744, 15th February 1917; ADN 74J241: Dumont papers, 4th March 1915; Congar, *Journal*, p.52.

⁶³ Labbé, *A la guerre*, p.20, 'L' nouviell' "Kulture".'

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.56, 'Anniversaire du bombardement d' Lille.'

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.6-7, 38-9, written in November 1914 and June 1915.

⁶⁶ Couvreur, *A propos de Bottes*, p.56-9.

⁶⁷ See Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, pp.108-133 for the 'Massacre des Innocents' (dogs); Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.168-9.

innocents,' in which the birds are just as much heroic victims of the war as the *occupés* themselves:

Nos gracieux pigeons domestiques,
Oiseaux aux idé's pacifiques,
Ont ainsi répandu leu sang,
L' mêm' qué l' civil non combatant.⁶⁸

This poem contains what the author insists was the true story of a woman who did not declare her pigeon because it was infirm. She was sent to a military tribunal and sentenced to a 400-mark fine, but the pigeon itself was 'deported' to Germany, never to be seen again.⁶⁹ Yet sometimes the Germans decreed that the French population was mistreating various animals,⁷⁰ leading certain *occupés* to claim that the Germans were perfect humanitarians when it came to animals.⁷¹

German barbarism and lack of humanity was a recurring theme. The Germans are portrayed as smelly,⁷² greedy,⁷³ drunkards,⁷⁴ who lacked solidarity, often fighting between themselves.⁷⁵ However, the focus was not always on the Germans; the patriotism of the *occupés* provided the subject for numerous works. They were shown to express humanitarian concerns for Allied prisoners of war, offering them aid.⁷⁶ In a sonnet written in April 1915, Labbé stated that the rest of France should know that the *Lillois* remained hopeful for victory, and above all remained French.⁷⁷ He praised the relief work of the *Fourneaux économiques de la guerre*,⁷⁸ but at the same time attacked

⁶⁸ Mousseron, *Boches*, 'L' Pigeon Infirme,' p.54-9, specifically 56.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ ADN 9R748: German poster, Tourcoing, 16th January 1918.

⁷¹ Fleury, *Sous la botte*, vol. I, p.258; Maucière, *L'Orage*, p.198-9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 'Nicht Gut! Malheur la Guerre,' p.86, written in February 1918.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 'L'Officier prussien, l' vague et l'ordonnance,' p.92-3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.87, 92-3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 'Vertus allemandes au Pays occupé,' p.73.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 'Humanité,' p.64, written in 1917.

⁷⁷ Labbé, *A la guerre*, p.29, 'A l' première hirondelle de r'tour à Lille (Printemps 1915).'

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.25, 'Les Fourneaux économiques de la guerre.'

‘pessimistes,’⁷⁹ war profiteers,⁸⁰ and especially women engaged in relations with the Germans.⁸¹ Similarly, a printed poem in *ch’ti* appears in Blin’s diary in February 1918, criticising theft and moral decline resulting from penury.⁸² A 1919 publication contained an enormous 139 poems written, in standard French, in Lille during the occupation, and touching upon all of the above themes.⁸³

These song and poems were taken seriously by the Germans, when they heard and understood them. Labbé was arrested in October 1915 and was sentenced to nine months’ imprisonment. He was sent to Anrath and eventually spent a year at Holzminden, where he continued to compose songs.⁸⁴ In Cambrai, one Mlle Schneider was imprisoned for 10 days for composing anti-German poems.⁸⁵

The composition of original songs was not the only way music could be used for resistance. One of the most frequently cited events of the occupation was the singing of the *Marseillaise*, evidently representing patriotic expression and opposition to the Germans, and often punished by them. Blin notes that one man was sentenced to four weeks’ imprisonment for having done so;⁸⁶ Degnitère mentioned ten people imprisoned for the same act, carried out on 14th July 1915,⁸⁷ and a teacher in Villers-Plouich was imprisoned for four months for having encouraged her pupils to sing the *Marseillaise* and for ‘avoir tenu des propos Francophiles.’⁸⁸ Blin also stated that the deportees of Easter

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.54, ‘Les Pessimistes.’

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11, ‘Chin qu’on vo’ pendant la guerre (Occupation de Lille par les Allemands).’

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.10-12; p.47-8. ‘Les Bochartes’ (5th August 1915); p.49, ‘A l’ Poubelle les Paillaisses à Boches.’

⁸² ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 1st February 1918 – poem entitled ‘Bonne Histoire (En Patois du Crû), Caroline au Ravitaillement,’ n.d., n.a.

⁸³ Alfred Dujardin, *Lille captive 1914-1918. Rimes et fantaisies* (Lille, 1919).

⁸⁴ Abbe, *A la guerre*, preface, p.2.

⁸⁵ Bukowski, ‘Cambrai,’ p.79.

⁸⁶ ADN 9R225: Blin diary, 29th October 1915.

⁸⁷ Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 14th July 1915, p.183.

⁸⁸ ADHS 4 M 517: testimony of the teacher herself, report n°1634 (5th June 1917), cited in Nivet, ‘Femmes,’ p.289.

1916 sang the *Marseillaise* and *Flotte petit drapeau* whilst being evacuated,⁸⁹ and a multitude of sources attest to such singing among evacuees, deportees and forced labourers across the Nord and beyond.⁹⁰

However, some people did manage to sing the *Marseillaise* unpunished, such as M. Caudrelier, a corrupt member of the local CRB of Râches. He allegedly sang the *Marseillaise* not only in the presence of, but *with* the German secretary to the *Kommandantur* on 14th July 1916.⁹¹ This case was exceptional, and for the most part, ‘Dans le contexte de l’occupation, *La Marseillaise*, comme *L’Internationale*, apparaît comme un chant séditionnel.’⁹² Singing it expressed French pride and patriotism, in turn linked to a determination not to become simply a German-administered territory.

A similar motive lay behind the resistance to the use of ‘German time’ (an hour ahead of French time), obligatory for all timekeeping devices from late 1914,⁹³ further complicated by the introduction of Daylight Saving in April 1916.⁹⁴ Some historians see this as a cornerstone of the ‘Germanisation’ of the occupied area,⁹⁵ as well as a tactic of

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8th April 1916.

⁹⁰ See, for example, ADN 9R225: Blin diary, 8th February and 8th April 1915; ADN 15 J 85: Commission Historique du Nord, Questionnaire de la Guerre de 1914, Arrondissement d’Avesnes, Canton d’Avesnes-Sud, Commune d’Avesnelles (7th August 1922), p.15, response 36; ADN 74J223: Ministère de la Guerre, Etat-Major, 5^e Bureau, Contrôle Postal Militaire, 23rd June 1916, attached letter n°13 – ‘Lettre de J. le 8 Mai 1916, a [sic] Madame Vanackers, 54 rue Carnot, Berck Plage.’ See also Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitière diary, 16-17th October 1916, p.183; Hirsch diary, 15th April 1916, p.255; Fleury, *Sous la Botte*, vol. I, p.93 and 204; Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, p.124; Basdevant, *Déportations*, p.13; *The Times* (29th July 1916).

⁹¹ ADN 9R1229: Râches, report of gendarmes Deburaux, Jell and Hatte, ‘Renseignements sur Messieurs Robert Augustin, et Malengé Louis, Maire et adjoint de la commune de Râches (Nord),’ 17th February 1919.

⁹² Nivet, ‘Femmes,’ p.290.

⁹³ Trenard, *Cambrai*, p.259; ‘Proclamation à la population,’ Lille, 16th October 1914, in Cliquennois-Pâque, *Lille*, p.71-2.

⁹⁴ See various documents in ADN 9R240 for a debate about Daylight Saving; ‘Actes de l’Autorité Allemande: Avis,’ *BdL*, n°153 (30th April 1916), and articles in n°155 (7th May 1916), n°157 (14th May 1916), n°158 (18th May 1916).

⁹⁵ Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.23; Dejardin, ‘Tourcoing,’ p.11-12; Debarge, ‘Fourmies,’ p.164.

humiliation,⁹⁶ and it is likely that *occupés* shared such a view. Indeed, this would explain the resistance that took place: Degnitière used French time in her diary, putting German time in brackets;⁹⁷ Blin admitted that using German time would be better on a pragmatic level, but that it went against his patriotism.⁹⁸ Such was the lack of conformity to this regulation that the Germans had to carry out visits to verify clocks,⁹⁹ or stop people in the street asking them for the time – if they gave French time, they would be punished.¹⁰⁰ In order to avoid punishment but maintain resistance, Blin stopped the clock in his school altogether: ‘elle cessera de marquer l’heure.’¹⁰¹ By doing so, Blin and many others like him demonstrated patriotism and opposition to German rule.

Trooping the Colour

This sentiment was further expressed through the colours of the French flag, evidently a strong symbol of patriotism,¹⁰² a motif visible in occupation poetry – where *occupés* perceived French troops to be fighting for the ‘cher drapeau,’¹⁰³ and *Bochartes* as betraying their flag.¹⁰⁴ For *résistante* Louise de Bettignies, who refused to sing in German in a German prison, this was to betray the flag – symbol of all she stood for.¹⁰⁵ Such was the symbolic power of flags that a man from Escarmain was considered suspect by evacuated *occupés* because he presented the *Kommandant* with the German flag.¹⁰⁶ Flags were also used as a symbol of joy at the liberation, with populations waving French

⁹⁶ Allender, *Survivre*, p.60-1.

⁹⁷ Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitière diary, 1st January 1915, p.168.

⁹⁸ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 3rd May 1916.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27th June 1916.

¹⁰⁰ Cotel, *Walters*, p.50.

¹⁰¹ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 27th June 1916.

¹⁰² Nivet, ‘Femmes,’ p.289.

¹⁰³ AML 4H291: Mlle Munch to mayor, 9th November 1918, contains a poem written in Pérenchies ‘en 1916 contre les civils français et Belges [sic] faisant de bon gré [sic], des tranchées pour les Allemands.’

¹⁰⁴ Labbé, *A la guerre*, ‘Les Bochartes’ (5th August 1915), p.47.

¹⁰⁵ Deruyk, *Louise*, p.204-5.

¹⁰⁶ ADHS 4M513: report n°476, 12th January 1917.

and Allied flags to greet Allied armies.¹⁰⁷ Quite where the flags came from is unclear, but some observers assumed that many hid them in the hope of victory.¹⁰⁸

On 22nd February 1915, Blin remarked: ‘Des femmes arborent la cocarde tricolore: bravade, exaspération, patriotisme?’¹⁰⁹ Whatever the response, the effects of such actions were clear, as he noted three days later: ‘Cocardes tricolores, pour témoigner que les femmes françaises ont du cœur. Froide & digne audace. Ces nœuds épinglés un peu partout charment la vue: c’est ravissant & émotionnant à la fois: c’est de la franche manière française.’¹¹⁰ Two days later, Blin noted that a group of children comprising the “Sévignettes” se parent de rubans tricolores et chantent la Marseillaise. Conséquence: M. L’Insp^t primaire est appelé à la kmdnt^{re}.¹¹¹ Indeed, during the *affaire des sacs* period, the Germans became increasingly frustrated with such displays of French patriotism. Degnitère noted on 4th March 1915 that:

Il passe à Lille 200 prisonniers français hirsutes [...] Grande émotion chez les Lillois. Les Lilloises portent maintenant ostensiblement la cocarde tricolore. Cela déplaît aux Allemands qui prétendent que nous sommes sous leur domination; ils en arrêtent plusieurs. Rassemblement; un soldat donne un coup de croisse dans la foule, d’où nouvelle effervescence.¹¹²

The next day *occupés* were punished for crying ‘Vive la France,’ and by 6th March, all insignias were banned,¹¹³ as was the wearing of national colours in any form.¹¹⁴

Yet on 24th March 1915, the *Kommandant* of Roubaix explained to the population, via a poster, that:

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, ADN J1950: Journal de guerre, Pierre Motte, notaire à Lille, 17th October 1918; Séverine Salome, ‘Valenciennes,’ p.208.

¹⁰⁸ *The Times* (19th October 1918).

¹⁰⁹ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 22nd February 1915.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25th February 1915.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27th February 1915.

¹¹² Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 4th March 1915, p.174.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 5th and 6th March 1915.

¹¹⁴ AML 4H134: German poster, Lille, 6th March 1915.

Jusqu'à maintenant j'ai toléré que des petits drapeaux aux couleurs nationales soient placés sur les tombes des soldats français et anglais.

Ma tolérance a été remerciée de la façon suivante: Il y a quelques jours on a placé d'une manière provoquante [sic] et sans goût un drapeau tricolore de trois mètres de hauteur sur les tombes des soldats.

J'ai puni les coupables ainsi que le conservateur du cimetière de peines d'emprisonnement et j'ordonne:

Il est interdit de placer sur les tombes des soldats des objets quelconques aux couleurs nationales des puissances alliées contre l'Allemagne, par exemple des drapeaux, des rubans, des cocardes, etc.¹¹⁵

This ban was enforced – that day, the *conservateur* and *gardien* of a cemetery in Roubaix were imprisoned for 3 and 5 days respectively for having left a French flag on the grave of French soldiers.¹¹⁶ By 14th July 1915, German measures appeared to be working, as Blin was lamenting that the 'drapeaux tricolores restent cachés,' despite the fact that he had seen 'un "patriote" en chapeau montant!'¹¹⁷ Yet some 'gamins se sont amusés à piquer de petits drapeaux tricolores sur des bouchons qu'ils ont ensuite lancés dans le canal.'¹¹⁸ Numerous similar actions occurred.¹¹⁹ In Lille, a widowed *cabatière* hung two French flags from her building in May 1916, causing a French policeman to ask her to remove them. She refused, so the policeman had to do so himself, and the Germans seized the flags.¹²⁰

Small, almost hidden, symbols were used to demonstrate allegiance to the Allied cause. In September 1915, Blin remarked: 'Ceci fait plaisir à voir: les magasins de lingerie exposent à leur étalage des motifs pour broderies, porte-journaux, pelotes, etc avec l'effigie du roi Albert, de Poincaré, du gl [sic] Joffre, drapeaux & fleurs tricolores comme armements. D'où & comment arrivent ces "blancs-la"?'¹²¹ Such actions continued

¹¹⁵ ADN 9R716: German poster, Roubaix, 24th March 1915.

¹¹⁶ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 24th March 1915.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14th July 1915.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16th July 1915.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, p.157; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.253-4; Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.69.

¹²⁰ AML 4H266: report of 29-30th May 1916.

¹²¹ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 5th September 1915.

throughout the occupation. As late as August 1918, Blin noted that bookshops were selling cards containing the French flag and a heart on them (the Catholic patriotic symbol), which people wore underneath their coats, occasionally showing them to French passers-by.¹²² Again, Catholic and Republican symbols could both be used to reinforce a sense of Frenchness and opposition to the occupiers. Due to space constraints, the role of religion in resistance cannot be studied in detail, but this has been dealt with by others.¹²³

Nevertheless, as with some of the above cases, explicit displays of patriotism were mostly reserved for national and religious holidays, especially Bastille Day. In Tourcoing,

Le 14 juillet 1915 fut l'occasion d'une manifestation patriotique. Chacun sortit vêtu de ses plus beaux effets et portant à la boutonnière les couleurs françaises. Cette manifestation du souvenir et de l'espérance fut immédiatement interdite. Tous alors remplacèrent les rubans tricolores par des fleurs naturelles. Dépeindre la rage de l'occupant serait impossible, et amendes de pleuvoir.¹²⁴

This 'état constant [...] de rébellion latente, amena la Kommandatur à ordonner, le 18 août 1915, la création d'une carte d'identité.'¹²⁵ The following 14th July in Roubaix, there was a 'Manifestation au cimetière: couronnes et bouquets sont déposés sur les tombes des soldats français et anglais – Quelques "patriotes" ont revêtu redingote et haute de forme. Plusieurs jeunes filles se sont mises en tricolore, et c'est tout: la lassitude et le découragement sont trop profonds pour réagir.'¹²⁶ That same day in Douai, flowers in the national colours were left on the tombs of French soldiers.¹²⁷

¹²² *Ibid.*, 5th August 1918.

¹²³ See most documents in ADN 9R585; Cnudde-Lecointre, 'Monseigneur Charost,'; idem, 'L'Eglise'; Becker, *War and Faith*; Salome, 'Valenciennes,' p.9; Buffton, 'Ritual of Surrender,' p.164, 206-7.

¹²⁴ Maudlère, *L'Orage*, p.104.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 14th July 1915.

¹²⁷ Vandenbussche, 'Le pouvoir municipal,' p.462.

On 1st November (*La Toussaint*) 1916, Blin attempted to place flowers on the graves of Allied soldiers. He was forbidden from doing so, but noted that the tombs were already flooded with flowers.¹²⁸ The graves of Allied servicemen were a focal point of patriotic expression, and by extension resistance to the Germans. In January 1915, Blin successfully placed flowers on the graves of two British airmen, which were already ‘couvertes de bouquets, de palmes, de souvenirs touchant témoignage de la pieuse reconnaissance de ceux à qui les aviateurs ont apporté des “nouvelles” au prix de leur existence, sublime sacrifice et bien émouvant.’¹²⁹ The symbolism of the Allied dead was evident. Funeral services were held for these servicemen,¹³⁰ which combined grief and patriotism. Indeed, in October 1916 the mayor of Lille refused to participate in a ceremony for killed German personnel unless the Germans offered to do the same for the tombs of killed French soldiers – which they did.¹³¹

Living Allied soldiers also proved conduits for a certain type of resistance. Many *occupés* greeted Allied prisoners of war marching through towns and villages – an event particularly frequent in Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing,¹³² but not exclusive to these towns.¹³³ Many believed that the German goal was to demoralise the *occupés*, but the effect seemed reversed. *Occupés* smiled at prisoners of war, shook their hands, gave them food and goods, shouted ‘Vive la France’ or ‘Vive l’Angleterre,’ even cried. Such events were particularly commonplace in 1914 and 1915,¹³⁴ causing the Germans to forbid these

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1st November 1916.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16th January 1915.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6th April 1915.

¹³¹ ADN 74J241: Dumont papers, 8th October 1916.

¹³² See, for example, AMT H4A25: Commission Historique du Nord, Questionnaire de la Guerre de 1914, Réponse de la Ville de Tourcoing (n.d., but sent to municipal council on 29th April 1921), response 32; Trochon, *Lille*, p.221; ADN 15J87: Memoirs of Momal, chapter XVII.

¹³³ ADN 9R513: Commissaire de Police of Denain to Sous-Préfet of Valenciennes, 24th December 1918, p.10; Nivet, ‘Femmes,’ p.290; Fleury, *Sous la botte*, vol. II, p.19, 150,

¹³⁴ ADN 74J241: Dumont papers, 4th March 1915; 74J225: Blin diary, 12th November 1914; ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 4-9th March 1915; Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 4th March 1917 and Hirsch diary, 12th November 1914 and 5th March 1915, p.174, 227 and 233 respectively.

actions and to punish contraventions¹³⁵ – in Lille, during one night in March 1915 over 400 people were arrested for this.¹³⁶ However, the *occupés* continued to carry out these acts throughout the occupation,¹³⁷ meaning that as late as May 1918 the Germans had to ‘rappelle à nouveau à la population’ the list of restrictions concerning prisoners of war, the breaching of which was perceived as ‘résistance passive.’¹³⁸ In August 1918, people were still engaging in and punished for such resistance.¹³⁹

The intent of these actions is clear: Trollin noted that a crowd surrounding Allied prisoners ‘manifeste violemment sa foi patriotique.’¹⁴⁰ Even a German onlooker appeared to understand what was taking place:

La Grand’ Place [sic] est barrée tout autour. Les habitants se rassemblent par milliers. Un bruit sinistre les a attirés de tous les quartiers de la Ville [...] Un frisson parcourt la foule [...]

Sur le balcon de la maison voisine, plusieurs dames tirent à la dérobée leurs mouchoirs et envoient aux prisonniers un salut discret... En bas, sur la place une Française au tempérament particulièrement ardent ne peut malgré le danger, maîtriser ses sentiments [sic] patriotiques et crie d’une voix perçante: “Vive la France!” On l’arrête. La voilà aussitôt décontenancée; ensuite elle tente de résister.¹⁴¹

Yet it may also be argued that the population was expressing a desire to boost the morale of the prisoners of war (which seemed to work),¹⁴² as well as a humanitarian impulse. Allied prisoners, especially Russians, in the occupied area were generally treated badly by

¹³⁵ See, for example, *BdL*, n°116 (23rd December 1915); ADN 9R557: Extrait des Procès-verbaux de la Commandanture de Lille, 4th November 1914; AML 4H134: German poster, Lille, 6th March 1915.

¹³⁶ ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 7th March 1915.

¹³⁷ ADN 9R661: cutting from *BdL* (13th July 1916), ‘justice militaire allemande.’

¹³⁸ ADN 9R748: German poster, Tourcoing, 17th May 1918.

¹³⁹ ADN 9R721: German poster, Roubaix, 31st August 1918.

¹⁴⁰ ADN 9R224: Trollin diary, 4th March 1915.

¹⁴¹ AML 4H60: translations from *Lille in Deutscher Hand* (Lille, 1915), ‘Nouvelles de Victoires à Lille.’

¹⁴² ADN 9R1242: in a letter of 27th January 1919, a Commandant of a Portuguese Corps wrote to the municipal council of Lille expressing his gratitude for the warm welcome his captured troops received when marched through the city during the occupation.

the Germans,¹⁴³ despite German claims to the contrary.¹⁴⁴ They were used for front-line forced-labour operations – as were German prisoners of war by the Allies¹⁴⁵ – meaning the *occupés* frequently came into contact with them, experiencing their maltreatment first hand. Consequently, perhaps the intent of the above actions was not resistance but compassion, although the two were connected: by showing compassion to Allied prisoners, the *occupés* expressed a desire for Allied victory, and humanitarian motives inextricably connected with their own understanding of the war – a war of civilisation against barbarism. This compassionate resistance may be a forerunner to the humanitarian ideas underlining some of the resistance of the Second World War, as championed by Rod Kedward.¹⁴⁶

Resisting Requisitions

The refusal of the *occupés* to hand over goods requisitioned by the Germans is well documented across occupied France and Belgium.¹⁴⁷ It is difficult to establish the true nature and extent of this, as the acts were as hidden as the objects themselves – a common problem in studying resistance.¹⁴⁸ Further, the intent behind such actions may not have been as heroic or patriotic as it might seem – some may simply have hidden goods out of a desire for survival or economic self-interest. Others may have been engaging in the black market, and simply did not want the authorities (whether German or French) to find out.¹⁴⁹ Yet these actions were understood, at the time and afterwards,

¹⁴³ See ADHS 4M513: report n°518, 18th January 1917 (Louvroil); Trochon, *Lille*, p.219-20; Gromaire, *L'Occupation*, p.239; Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920* (Cambridge, 2011).

¹⁴⁴ *Gazette des Ardennes*, N°1 (1st November 1914). Accessed online on 6th April 2009 at <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/feldztggazarden1914bis1915/0001>

¹⁴⁵ Uta Hinz, 'Prisonniers,' (trans. Nicolas Beaupré), in *Encyclopédie*, p.779-80; see Jones, *Violence*, pp.121-251.

¹⁴⁶ Kedward, 'La résistance,' p.113.

¹⁴⁷ De Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.214; Redier, *Allemands*, p.144-7; Debarge, 'Fourmies,' p.167-70; Molina, 'Les femmes,' p.19; Cottel, *Waller*, p.31; Bajart, 'Les femmes,' p.109-110; Bukowski, 'Cambrai,' p.78; Ramirez, 'Les villes,' p.22; Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.59; *The Times* (19th October 1918 and 19th June 1919).

¹⁴⁸ Hollander and Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing,' p.540.

¹⁴⁹ Molina, 'Les femmes,' p.19.

to represent a form of resistance – however problematic this may be. Debarge sees the motives as a combination of economic resistance, a desire not to furnish goods which could be used against the *patrie*, and to preservation of property.¹⁵⁰ This seems a likely explanation, as *occupés* perceived their non-compliance as a form of resistance, a means of withholding resources from the Germans.

Such was the view of the Yerta sisters in the Aisne, who hid their mattresses so that ‘the enemy of France’ could not sleep on them.¹⁵¹ Similarly, in Wallers inhabitants left their mattresses out in the rain so that they would be unfit for use.¹⁵² In Tourcoing, many people sold items before they could be requisitioned,¹⁵³ and one man said that he would rather hide his car than give it to the Germans.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Tourcoing in particular saw much resistance to requisitions. Here, factory owner M. Sion hid cotton reserves for two years before being discovered,¹⁵⁵ and hiding copper was commonplace¹⁵⁶ – despite the mayor’s belief that the population should declare its goods given the professionalism of German search teams.¹⁵⁷

German efficiency meant that hiding places became increasingly rare as the occupation went on, but *occupés* still attempting to withhold goods from the Germans. All over the Nord, as elsewhere,¹⁵⁸ people refused German requisitions and concealed goods.¹⁵⁹ Even

¹⁵⁰ Debarge, ‘Fourmies,’ p.167-70.

¹⁵¹ Yerta sisters *Six Women*, p.132.

¹⁵² Cotel, *Waller*, p.31.

¹⁵³ Bajart, ‘Les femmes,’ p.110.

¹⁵⁴ Maucière, *L’Orage*, p.20.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.145.

¹⁵⁷ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 8th October 1917.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Congar, *Journal*, p.128; ADHS 4M513: report n°505, 17th January 1917 (Croix-Moligneaux), and 681, 6th February 1917 (Leschelle).

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, ADHS 4M513: report n°706, 9th February 1917 (Denain); n°709, 9th February 1917 (Cambrai); n°561, 20th January 1917 (Monceau-St-Waast); n°829, 28th February 1917 (Fourmies); n°741, 15th February 1917 (Gouzeaucourt); n°762, 17th February 1917 (Walincourt); n°770, 19th February 1917 (Valenciennes); n°881, 6th March 1917 (Trélon); n°1061, 21st March 1917 (Roubaix); n°1062, 21st March 1917 (Roubaix).

priests hid materials from the Germans.¹⁶⁰ Despite the commonplace occurrence of such actions, this was not an easy task, often owing to denunciations¹⁶¹ and meticulous German search teams, as David Hirsch relates.¹⁶² It seems that many individuals managed to hide a small number of items, whereas others hid thousands of kilogrammes of goods – such was the case for M. Coquelet of Valenciennes, who hid 20,000kg of potatoes;¹⁶³ or Ernest Lecopyer from Fourmies, who concealed 30,000kg of copper.¹⁶⁴ In Roubaix, cloth worth two million francs had been hidden until March 1917.¹⁶⁵ However, few people succeeded in hiding goods for the duration of the occupation, and uncovering concealed items usually created a knock-on effect making further concealment more difficult. For example, in January 1917, the discovery of hidden goods in some factory basements led to a massive search of all basements in Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing.¹⁶⁶

Those found guilty of withholding material were threatened with fines up to 1,000 Marks and up to three months' imprisonment.¹⁶⁷ For those hiding military material, the penalty was more severe.¹⁶⁸ These punishments were commonplace throughout the occupation,¹⁶⁹ and certain individuals later received recognition from the French government for their suffering and patriotism, in the form of the *Médaille des Victimes*

¹⁶⁰ Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.59.

¹⁶¹ See, for example, ADN 2U1/445: CAN, n°12, 15th January 1921; n°20, 21st January 1921; n°28, 23rd February 1921.

¹⁶² Becker, *Journaux*, Hirsch diary, 30th December 1917, p.288.

¹⁶³ ADHS 4M513: report n°770, 19th February 1917.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, report n°829, 28th February 1917.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, report n°1146, 20th April 1917.

¹⁶⁶ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 26th January 1917.

¹⁶⁷ ADN 9R745: German poster, Valenciennes, 9th April 1915; German poster, Tourcoing, 17th September 1915.

¹⁶⁸ ADHS 4M513: report n°762, 17th February 1917 (Walincourt).

¹⁶⁹ ADN 9R720: German poster, Roubaix, 29th August 1917; ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 15th April 1916; ADN 9R716: German poster, Roubaix, 9th June 1915; ADN 9R795: Gardien-Chef de la Maison d'Arrêt de Loos to Prefect, 21st March and 15th July 1915.

de l'Invasion.¹⁷⁰ Others were investigated¹⁷¹ and punished¹⁷² for their role in denouncing the owners of hidden goods.

What is clear, then, is that many people sabotaged requisitions by hiding material and goods that they were supposed to declare. Indeed, doing so seemed like a reflex action, the natural thing to do when asked to furnish the occupier with further resources. Numerous *occupés* thus put patriotic and/or material interest above their own self-preservation, because they risked harsh penalties if caught. In doing so, they forced the Germans to spend time and resources finding material.

Passive Patriotism

Many *occupés* expressed their patriotism throughout the occupation via the use of symbolic forms of resistance – from humour to hiding goods, and even more disparate actions not studied here.¹⁷³ This patriotism was bound up in hatred of the ‘barbaric’ Germans and, due to the circumstances of the occupation and the importance of respectability, led inevitably to non-violent means of asserting opposition to the occupier.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, AN F23/375: Département du Nord, Recompenses Honorifiques, Proposition en faveur de Mme Froment Louise, Lille, 16th August 1922; Proposition en faveur de M. Plucbe Paul, Villers Plouich, 31st August 1922; Proposition en faveur de M. Suin Camille, Cerfontaine, 20th November 1922. All were awarded the *Médaille des Victimes de l'invasion*, 3^e classe, for being punished for hiding goods during the occupation.

¹⁷¹ See, for example, US NA Record Group 165: Procès-verbal, déclaration de Madame Marie Gaundry, rapatrié de Hautmont, Nord, 1918; ADN 9R1197: Sobre-le-château, Force spécial de la Gendarmerie attachée à l'armée britannique, Procès-verbal constatant renseignements sur Mme De Metz, 16th November 1918; ADN 9R1193: Saint Rémy Chaussée, Procès-verbal, Vernet and Salle, 27th March 1919; ADN 9R1229: Comines, passim; ADN 9R1196: Mouvaux, Racaud, n°125, 26th October 1918.

¹⁷² See, for example, ADN 2U1/444: CAN, n°73, 23rd October 1920; 2U1/445: CAN, n°12, 15th January and n°20, 21st January 1921.

¹⁷³ See, for example, French children playing soldiers, and the ‘French’ always winning – Redier, *Allemands*, p.211-12; the use of hand gestures to insult Germans – Joseph Mongis, *Quatre ans sous la botte allemande* (Paris, 1919), p.4, and AMT H4A29: report into the ‘manifestation hostiles’ of 11th April 1915. See also: graffiti/attacks on German posters – ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 5th February 1915, AMT H4A29: Commissaire Central to mayor of Tourcoing, 22nd May 1915, note from von Tessin, 17th, 20th, 22nd May 1915, and ADN 9R509: Avis, Croix, 15th September 1918; or anonymous letters insulting the Germans – AMT H4A29: note from von Tessin, 19th April 1915, or von Tessin to mayor, 16th April 1915; damaging or removing German signposts – ADN 9R748: German poster, Tourcoing, 5th January 1918.

Whilst not aiding the Allied victory or having any real military value, symbolic, ‘passive’ resistance allowed the *occupés* to retain their identity in their own no-man’s-land. It allowed them to maintain and preach faith in the Allied victory, which remained widespread throughout the occupied area,¹⁷⁴ despite the suffering experienced.¹⁷⁵ It also provided a morale boost, and ultimately allowed the *occupés* to remain above all French, without resorting to the perceived ‘barbarism’ of their enemies. In this way, a certain form of respectability was maintained. This was cultural resistance, central to the occupied *culture de guerre* and to occupied life. Understanding both *mauvaise conduite* and resistance highlights the complexities of the occupation experience.

What might be perceived as more ‘active’ forms of resistance did exist, although these were even rarer, and were never as ‘active’ as those of the Second World War. This is the subject of the final chapter of this section of the thesis.

¹⁷⁴ Trochon, *Lille*, p.324-5; Whitaker, *Under the Heel*, p.10.

¹⁷⁵ Whitaker, *Under the Heel*, p.31-2.

III – Active Resistance (*coups de poker, coups d'éclat*)

Active resistance here means actions more easily classified as resistance, often organised, and more evidently comprising a purposeful infringement of German rules than previous resistances. Such acts were riskier, punishable by the harshest penalties. They represent resistance as conceived by Debruyne or Becker.¹ 'Active' resistance rarely meant armed or violent resistance,² but it did mean aiding escaped Allied prisoners of war, involvement in espionage and escape networks, and clandestine publications, whose organisation and morale-boosting effects represent a crossover between symbolic and active resistance. Finally, explicit refusals to work for the Germans are also included; perhaps a controversial categorisation, but one justified by the severity of the punishment inflicted on those engaging in such actions, and the clear moral-patriotic choice made. Active resistance is not devoid of symbolism or respectability, although there is an indescribable quality which makes these actions appear to some more obviously resistance than respectable or symbolic resistance. Indeed, many of the acts studied here constitute the most commonplace examples of resistance cited and commemorated from 1918 onwards, even though they never involved more than a minority of *occupés*.

Patriotic Publications and Clandestine Correspondence

The clandestine press of the occupied Nord was miniscule compared to that of Second-World-War France.³ Yet a handful of publications did exist in the Nord, the most celebrated of which resulted from a highly organised operation: in Roubaix, *Abbé* Pinte, industrialist M. Dubar, professor of Pharmacy M. Willot and other collaborators

¹ Debruyne, 'Resistance: the prequel,' p.1; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.258-9.

² However, some cases of armed or violent resistance did exist. See ADN 9R716: German poster, Roubaix, 29th April 1915; ADN 9R720: German poster, Roubaix, 14th October 1917; 9R732: Commissaire Central to Prefect, 13th October 1917; 9R746: German poster, Tourcoing, 20th August 1917; AN F23/375: Département du Nord, Récompense Honorifique, Proposition en faveur de M. Debiève [sic] Arthur, from Gommegnies.

³ It is estimated that, at their peak in late 1943 to early 1944, underground periodicals distributed nearly 1.5 million copies a month, and hundreds of thousands of tracts. Pierre Albert, 'The Journalism of the French Resistance: An Underground War of Words' (trans. Claude-Jean Bertrand), accessed online on 22nd August 2011 at <http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/msj/courage.summer2000/y08.html>

fashioned an illegal radio receiver to pick up Allied transmissions from the Eiffel Tower (although they were not the only people to do so).⁴ This information was used from February 1915 to create a clandestine newspaper whose name changed many times – including *La Patience*, *L'Oiseau de France*, *L'Echo de France* and *Le Journal des occupés... inoccupés*.⁵ The publication lasted until the imprisonment of the editors by the Germans in December 1916,⁶ and according to one source the circulation was 250 copies every month⁷ – mainly in the Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing area, but sometimes copies reached Douai and even Belgian towns.⁸ It is impossible to know how many people read these publications.⁹ The full story of this journal is compelling, but due to space restraints cannot be covered here.¹⁰

What can be studied, however, is its form and content. Apart from some local news and Allied communiqués relating the international situation, there was a lot of overlap with symbolic resistance, as both humour and patriotism underlay the publication. A frequent theme is the call for the *occupés* to remain dignified and patriotic: one issue of *La Patience* contains the slogan ‘Ce qui fait la grandeur de la Patrie, c’est la valeur morale de ses enfants.- Soyons forts, soyons généreux, pour faire une France plus forte et plus généreuse encore!’ This is followed by a similar message: ‘Soyons forts. C’est [sic] devant l’épreuve que se révèlent les caractères et “nul ne se connaît tant qu’il n’a pas souffert.”’¹¹ The message preached is clearer in the following issue, the front page of which contains the following quotation underneath the title: ‘Savoir montrer, autour de soi, malgré les tristesses de l’heure présente, une patience inlassable, une invincible confiance, c’est servir

⁴ ADHS 4M513: report n°1062, 21st March 1917.

⁵ ADN 9R975, *passim*.

⁶ Leman, *Pages actuelles*, especially p.7-11; ADHS 4M513: report n°1031, 16th March 1917 (Lille) and n°1252, 28th April 1917 (Tourcoing); McPhail, *Silence*, p.133-4.

⁷ Leman, *Pages*, p.17.

⁸ McPhail, *Silence*, p.133.

⁹ Buffton, ‘Ritual of Surrender,’ p.117-20.

¹⁰ For further details, see Leman, *Pages*; de Forge and Maucière, *Feuilles*; Trochon, *Lille*, p.122-4; Maucière, *L’Orage*, p.35-6; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.262-3; McPhail, *Silence*, p.126-35; ADN BH10462: *L’Abeille: Journal de la société des amis de Panckoucke*, n°1 (June 2005).

¹¹ ADN 9R973: *La Patience*, n°[5] (n.d.), p.33 of typewritten copy.

modestement mais non sans grandeur les intérêts de la Patrie.’¹² This slogan is found in other issues,¹³ demonstrating the way in which suffering was turned into martyrdom and heroism, as well as the importance of respectable conduct. The tagline changed along with the paper’s name: in November 1915, *La Liberté* had under its title, ‘Souffrons en silence avec confiance et patience en attendant l’heure de la délivrance qui sonnera bientôt.’¹⁴ For Becker, these calls to prudence demonstrated how the *occupés* wished to avoid extreme opposition to the Germans, and by doing so condemned German practices.¹⁵ This logic works well with my notion of respectability. Indeed, this was the officially-sanctioned attitude – occupied populations were praised for their strength, endurance and patience, as the French President himself stated in Tourcoing on 21st October 1918.¹⁶

Humour is visible throughout these publications. In one issue a copy of an article entitled ‘Les Bavarois à Lille’ from a German-published paper is republished, with sarcastic underlining of incorrect facts.¹⁷ Another issue contains the tongue-in-cheek Ten Commandments of von Heinrich, such as ‘Après 5 heures ne sortiras/Sous peine d’emprisonnement.’¹⁸ Many other articles mocked the Germans and show contempt for their perceived barbarism. Such is the case for a poem entitled ‘Occupation,’¹⁹ and the ‘Silhouettes de Boches’ series.²⁰ Humour was even added to editorial details and adverts. *La Liberté* noted that its administration and editorial board was located at the *Banque de France* which had become the German *Wirtschaftsausschuss* (economic committee) at

¹² *Ibid.*, n°6 (March 1915).

¹³ See, for example, *ibid.*, n°8 (April 1915) and the un-numbered May 1915 issue.

¹⁴ *La Liberté* (15th November 1915).

¹⁵ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.261.

¹⁶ AMT H4A26: *Tourcoing Libéré 17 Octobre 1918. Proclamation de l’Administration municipale. Visites: du Général Commandant des troupes britanniques, de M. le Président du Conseil des Ministres, de M. le Président de la République*, ‘Allocution prononcée dans l’hôtel de ville de Tourcoing, le 21 Octobre 1918, par M. le Président de la République, en réponse au discours de bienvenue M. Vandevenne, adjoint, faisant fonctions de Maire de Tourcoing,’ p.13-15.

¹⁷ *La Patience*, n°5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, n°6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, n°5 and 8.

Roubaix; its telegraphic address was said to be the *Kommandantur* of Lille. In December 1915, *La Vérité* gave a different location for its administration and offices: ‘Ne pouvant être un emplacement de tout repos, ils sont installés dans une cave automobile.’ Regarding the ‘annonces,’ the paper stated: ‘Les affaires étant nulles sous la domination allemande, nous conseillons à nos clients de réserver leur argent pour des temps meilleurs.’²¹

Certain mock adverts highlight those places where the Germans were welcomed too readily. The description of the Taverne Royale in Lille is demonstrative: ‘Débauche soignée, préparée, malaxée et épicée par des mains maquillées à la française. Très hospitalière aux allemands [sic]. Tarif gradué pour soldats, sous-officiers et officiers, même supérieurs. Dépouillement complet des scrupules, des dignités, des pudeurs et des trons.’²² The female owner of the Taverne was even investigated by French authorities after the war for *intelligence avec l’ennemi*, and that copy of *La Vérité* used as evidence. It is not clear what the investigating authorities’ conclusions were, but the documentation suggests that she was guilty.²³

The journal’s attitude towards the Taverne is representative of a wider tonal shift in late 1915, with anger and disgust at the Germans and those engaged in *mauvaise conduite* sitting prominently alongside positive patriotism. By December 1915, *La Vérité* not only published the mock adverts above, but also contained a lengthy article criticising the ‘immondes femelles’ of its title, in which the following line was repeated: ‘Ah! les viles; les dégoûtantes, les immondes femelles!!!’²⁴ Similarly, the previous month in *La Liberté*, the original call to patience was accompanied by a call for shaming:

en attendant la délivrance prochaine que chacun fasse son devoir en dénonçant au moment voulu toutes les personnes ayant eu des relations

²¹ ADN 3U281/77: Rouvaux pièces, *La Vérité*, n°1 (Lille, 15th December 1915).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, L’inspecteur de Police mobile Drouot to the Contrôleur général des Services de Recherche, 18th March 1919, et passim.

²⁴ *La Vérité*, n°1.

avec l'armée allemande, qui ont favorisé celle-ci; toutes ces femmes et filles impudiques qui se sont données ou vendues aux prussiens, etc. Prenez en note, aidez-nous à les démasquer, en attendant le jour prochain où nous pourrons faire justice.²⁵

The target of this resistance was thus not only the Germans, but also 'tainted' *occupées* – 'Dans notre prochain numéro nous donnerons la liste des filles et des femmes ayant eu des relations avec des soldats de l'Empereur.'²⁶ It is unclear why this change took place – perhaps it was reflective of the reality of occupation, perhaps simply anger on the part of the editors at the fact that *occupés* had denounced the publication in May 1915.²⁷

Pinte, Willot and Dubar also urged people to resist German requisitions,²⁸ as well as informing them of the risks of possessing a clandestine publication. Readers were told to pass on copies, but eventually to burn them, relaying news verbally instead. In order not to endanger the population, and to fool the Germans, the publications stated that they were published outside of occupied France.²⁹ Some copies even bore a rubber stamp stating that they had been dropped by airmail.³⁰ These details³¹ are impressive given the extreme difficulty in publishing this work in a period of shortages and paper requisitions.

Such precautionary measures were ultimately vain: the Germans dismantled the organisation, and the main collaborators were condemned in April 1917, with Pinte, Willot and Dubar sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.³² There can be no doubt that these men saw their actions as patriotic resistance – Pinte is alleged to have said, just

²⁵ *La Liberté* (15th November 1915).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ ADN 3U281/77: Rouvaux pièces, untilted typewritten document bearing the slogan of *La Patience*, May 1915.

²⁸ ADN 9R794: *La Patience*, n.d.

²⁹ *La Patience*, 'Observations et recommandations.' See also McPhail, *Silence*, p.128.

³⁰ McPhail, *Silence*, p.132-3.

³¹ The 14th July 1916 edition even came with a tricolour banner. See ADN 9R974: *L'Oiseau de France* (14th July 1916).

³² ADN 9R720: German poster, 'Condamnation,' Roubaix, 29th August 1917; ADN 9R799: sheet marked 'Avril 1917'; ADHS 4M513: report n°1252, 28th April 1917 (Tourcoing).

before his sentence, ‘La mort sur les champs de bataille, la mort ici..., [sic] c’est toujours pour la France.’³³ Freed at the Armistice, by 1922 Pinte and Dubar had been nominated for the *Légion d’Honneur* (Willot had died in 1919 as a result of his imprisonment).³⁴ All three eventually received this honour,³⁵ and other collaborators were nominated for various awards.³⁶ *L’Oiseau de France* had also received the *Prix Buisson* from the *Académie Française* in 1920.³⁷ Indeed, so well known were their exploits that they were parodied in *Invasion ’14*.³⁸

Despite the German dismantling of the *Patience* network, its resistance was relatively successful. Access to news from the outside world had a great, positive impact on the *occupés*. Blin noted in January 1915 that ‘Le baromètre moral, remonte, remonte, changement d’impression dû à l’arrivée des derniers journaux qui ont franchi le front.’³⁹ In March 1915 he had been given a copy of the *Journal des occupés... inoccupés*,⁴⁰ and in late July he found a copy of *L’Hirondelle de France* in his letterbox. He followed the instructions carefully: ‘Il est recommandé de la brûler après lecture. Je brûle donc, et c’est avec une sorte de religieux respect que je regarde la feuille se consumer.’⁴¹ In May the following year, Blin wrote that ‘L’“oiseau de France” messenger aérien nous apporte dans ses îles la vérité & le réconfort. Sois le bienvenu, vaillant oiseau!’⁴² It is unclear, however, whether Blin meant the publication *L’Oiseau de France*, or whether he was using the term as a nickname for French planes dropping Allied publications – a

³³ De Forge and Maclère, *Feuilles*, p.92.

³⁴ AN F23/377: Secrétaire du Comité du Musée de l’Invasion du Département du Nord, to Monsieur Reibel, Ministre des Régions Libérées, 23rd August 1922; McPhail, *Silence*, p.134.

³⁵ McPhail, *Silence*, p.134-5.

³⁶ See AN BB32/300: Paul Asoignon dossier, 2nd July 1921; AN F23/375: Ministère des Régions Libérées, Secrétariat Général, Récompense aux Otages, Proposition concernant M. Dispa Jules Aimé from Roubaix, 7th March 1921; *ibid.*, proposition concernant M. Dutrieux from Tourcoing, 7th March 1921; AN F23/377: proposition concernant Mme Dispa of Roubaix, n.d.

³⁷ McPhail, *Silence*, p.135.

³⁸ Van der Meersch, *Invasion*, p.57-60, 261, et passim.

³⁹ ADN 9R225: Blin diary, 30th January 1915.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19th March 1915.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29th July 1915.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 10th May 1916.

commonplace event during the occupation, and the subject of Mousseron's 1917 poem 'L'Osiau [sic] d' France.'⁴³ Either way, the confidence-inspiring effect of both resistance and Allied papers is clear. The municipality of Tourcoing certainly valued the publication – in its response to the *Commission Historique du Nord's* post-war questionnaire on the occupation, it described *La Patience* as 'l'œuvre admirable de propagande patriotique, jetée en plein milieu de la propagande germanophile pour ranimer notre foi sur l'avenir et vérifier nos espérances.'⁴⁴ Indeed, such was the value of Allied or patriotic publications that *rapatriés* complained when planes stopped dropping these in their area.⁴⁵

After the arrest and sentencing of the *Patience* collaborators, there is little trace of other resistance publications apart from the aforementioned *Les Vidanges*. As the title suggests, this publication focused entirely on naming and shaming those involved in *mauvaise conduite*, perhaps due to a potential lack of a wireless and thus a means to access news. The name may also have been ironic, as some *Lillois* had misheard the name as 'Vie d'Anges.'⁴⁶ Its descriptions of suspect women contained deeply misogynistic humour. One woman was said to be an 'Infecte personnage ayant de l'infection pour les boches... [sic] Femelle remarquable par sa laideur et ses nombreuses connaissances avec la pommade mercurielle.' A list was given of 'Quelques adresses où ils passent des scènes n'ayant d'exemples que celles de la race porcine.'⁴⁷ Suspect individuals (mainly women) were thus not only named, but their addresses given. Similar articles appeared in Belgian clandestine papers in 1917.⁴⁸ It would seem that the aim of this was to encourage reprisals, mainly after the occupation, but perhaps also during. Judging by the testimony of *rapatriés*, by March 1917 at least two issues of *Les Vidanges* had been

⁴³ 'L'Osiau d' France, 1917,' in Mousseron, *Boches*, p.80.

⁴⁴ AMT HA25: Commission Historique du Nord, Questionnaire de la Guerre de 1914, Réponse de la Ville de Tourcoing (n.d., sent to municipal council on 29th April 1921), response 74.

⁴⁵ ADHS 4M513: report n°514, 18th January 1917 (Ferrière-la-Grande).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, report n°892, 7th March 1917.

⁴⁷ ADN 3U281/77: *Les Vidanges*, n°1, edition B (1st January 1917).

⁴⁸ De Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.231.

published,⁴⁹ and people did remember those whose names appeared in it.⁵⁰ The authors were allegedly two men, MM. Gabiot and Godinne, who had been imprisoned by March 1917 following a denunciation.⁵¹ Interwar historian of Lille's occupation, Pierre Baucher, incorrectly dated the publication as existing 'vers 1915,' but also demonstrated its infringement of respectable norms:

Les auteurs crurent y devoir désigner, dans les termes les plus grossiers, les noms de ceux qui trafiquaient avec les Allemands, des femmes de tous rangs qui recevaient les ennemis, ainsi que les maisons où elles demeuraient. Il faut dire, à l'honneur des Lillois, que cette ignoble feuille qui n'eut qu'une courte existence souleva leur réprobation, que la police allemande s'émua, découvrit et punit les rédacteurs de ces dénonciations si basses.⁵²

This resistance was unrespectable and not appreciated by everyone; both part of and transgressing the *culture de l'occupé*. One could be unrespectable in upholding respectable norms, just as one could engage in resistance but also in *mauvaise conduite*.

Clandestine publications did exist in the occupied Nord, but were very limited in scale and form compared to occupied Belgium.⁵³ Others may have existed, but there is little evidence of this. *La Patience* and *Les Vidanges* demonstrate that some small cases of organised resistance did take place, and emphasise the importance of humour and respectability within this opposition. Unable to resist physically, some *occupés* organised this 'résistance morale par écrit.'⁵⁴ The intent of such publications was seemingly morale-

⁴⁹ ADHS 4M513: report n°914, 8th March 1917 (Lille).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, report n°936, 10th March 1917 (Lille); n°1188, 24th April 1917 (Lille); n°1199, 23rd April 1917 (Roubaix).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, report n°941, 10th March 1917 (Lille). However, in report n°914 (8th March 1917, Lille), it is stated that the Germans had not been able to discover the authors.

⁵² Pierre Baucher, *Au long des rues, souvenirs de l'occupation allemande à Lille* (Strasbourg, 1921), p.195, cited in Nivet, *France*, p.436, footnote 90.

⁵³ In total, there were about 80 publications in Belgium, in both French and Flemish – Debruyne and Paternostre, *La Résistance*, p.121.

⁵⁴ Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.116.

boosting, via both mocking the Germans and contradicting their propaganda-laden news.⁵⁵

Patriotic publications appeared in other forms. It was difficult, but not impossible, to access Allied or even German papers, offering precious news on war developments which differed from the propaganda of the *Gazette des Ardennes*. Certain individuals, and occasionally employees of the *mairie*, translated German papers and distributed them among the population.⁵⁶ *Le Matin* appeared relatively frequently because it was read by German officers,⁵⁷ and French papers were dropped by Allied planes and balloons, including *Le Cri des Flandres* and *Le Courrier de l'Air*.⁵⁸ However, access to such publications could be costly, often involving secret reading groups where one person would read the papers to a roomful of people, for a fee.⁵⁹ Some *occupés* introduced French papers into occupied territory and distributed them freely, for which they were punished.⁶⁰ This was clearly resistance to the German monopoly on information.

So too was engaging in correspondence with unoccupied France or other occupied communes. This was commonplace during the occupation, with the smugglers and *passeurs* carrying letters as well as goods; sometimes the Spanish ambassador transported letters.⁶¹ However, the number of letters sent and received diminished as the occupation

⁵⁵Debruyne and Paternostre, *La Résistance*, p.18. See also de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.242.

⁵⁶ For example, in Lille, 62 Frenchmen (including the mayor) were permitted to receive French translations of German-language papers – see AML 4H29, *passim*. For such translations, see AML 4H30 and 4H60; ADN 9R753: Commissaire Central de Tourcoing to Prefect, 2nd February 1916; Trochon, *Lille*, p.121.

⁵⁷ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 16th February and 28th March 1916.

⁵⁸ Trochon, *Lille*, p.117 and 121; NA WO106/45: Propaganda and Intelligence Schemes – Aerial dropping information to Agents, 1916-1920. For example, on the week of 6th July 1918, in a sortie particularly focused on Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing and Valenciennes, 4,985 copies of *Le Courrier de l'Air* were dropped by British planes.

⁵⁹ Trochon, *Lille*, p.122; Whitaker, *Under the Heel*, p.62-3.

⁶⁰ See, for example, AN F23/375: Récompenses Honorifiques aux Otages, Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française, Proposition en faveur de M. Vanlaton Eugène, from Lille, 3rd February 1921.

⁶¹ Salome, 'Valenciennes,' p.73.

went on, particularly after 1915. Nevertheless, attempts continued⁶² – Whitaker even managed to engage in two-way correspondence with his mother in England.⁶³ Other letters also arrived in France and England.⁶⁴ The mayor of Lille was called in front of a German judge in August 1916 because his letter protesting against the *enlèvements* of April 1916 had been published in Allied papers. When asked how his letter arrived in unoccupied France, he stated: ‘Je l’ignore. Elle a pu filtrer peut-être par une lettre qui aurait réussi à passer ou bien elle a été emportée par une personne qui a évacué le territoire occupé.’⁶⁵

One avenue of transportation was thus via *rapatriés*. This was also the case for a nine-page typewritten letter from M. Bouqueniaux from Trélon, smuggled by Mlle Sol, in which he wrote:

Que c’est bon d’envoyer des nouvelles vers la France, car nous ne comptons guère comme français depuis 30 mois, où nous sommes encerclés par une griffe de fer qui nous opprime et nous sépare du reste du monde. Nous ne savons rien de ce qui se passe dans notre chère France [...] ⁶⁶

The sense of engaging in an act of resistance via correspondence is palpable:

le soir on est épié par des agents de police “Boche” qui passent pour écouter aux portes et aux fenêtres [...] Vous voudrez bien excuser les fautes d’impression et d’orthographe, mais nous devons par instant cesser notre travail pour écouter si nous ne sommes pas surveillés, de sorte que nous sommes distraits. La machine fait du bruit [...] ⁶⁷

⁶² See ADN 9R716: German poster, Roubaix, 21st April 1915; ADN 9R719: German poster, 15th February 1917; Trochon, *Lille*, p.116-17; Salome, ‘Valenciennes,’ p.72-3; Molina, ‘Les femmes,’ p.14; Bajart, ‘Les femmes,’ p.25.

⁶³ Whitaker, *Under the Heel*, p.63-4.

⁶⁴ ADN 74J223: Ministère de la Guerre – Etat-Major – 5^e Bureau – Contrôle Postal Militaire, 23rd June 1916; *Le Temps*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Matin* of 29th July 1916.

⁶⁵ ADN 9R822: Comparution de M. le Maire devant le Juge pour la publication, en France, de lettres de protestation contre l’évacuation forcée par l’Autorité allemande,’ 7th August 1916.

⁶⁶ ADHS 4M513: report n°881, 6th March 1917, M Bouqueniaux, from Trélon, to M Jourdain (Moulain de l’Abbaye-Gif, Seine et Oise), 13th February 1917. Carried by Mlle Berthe Sol, who arrived on 3rd March.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Bouqueniaux's actions were risky: people caught transporting or engaging in illicit correspondence were punished.⁶⁸ In some cases, entire towns were chastised: Tourcoing was fined 20,000 francs in August 1915 because 'de nombreux habitants s'étant livrés pendant des mois entiers et jusqu'à ces derniers temps à une correspondance illicite.'⁶⁹ However, individuals involved in these acts were not always unwavering patriots and resisters: occasionally women engaging in or suspected of *mauvaise conduite* trafficked correspondence,⁷⁰ perhaps using their intimacy with the Germans to their advantage. One woman from Lille allegedly helped a French secret agent to transport letters between France and the occupied area, but was in fact working for the German secret service, giving the documents to the latter.⁷¹ Again in Lille, a network called 'Radolpha' transported correspondence, but its agents were considered suspicious by *rapatriés*.⁷² Other methods existed: in January 1915, the *Kommandant* of Lille complained that letters were being sent via Red Cross personnel, via prisoners of war, or even via German officers.⁷³

This correspondence undoubtedly raised the morale of the occupied population, providing a much-needed link to the outside world and circumventing German dominance. The defiance represented by such letters can be exemplified by Blin's diary entry of January 1915: 'Affiche verte: Herr Kmd^t nous informe que toute "correspondance entre les pays occupés et l'intérieur de la France est formellement

⁶⁸ See, for example, Becker, *Journaux*, Hirsch diary, 21st November 1915, p.256; ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 6th August 1915; ADN 9R745: German poster, Roubaix, 21st April 1915, and Tourcoing, 24th August 1915; ADN 9R716: German poster, Roubaix, 20th September 1915; ADN 9R227: Inspecteur primaire ffons de Directeur départemental de l'Enseignement primaire du Nord to Prefect, 18th July 1915; ADN 9R719: German poster, Roubaix, 15th February 1917; ADHS 4M513: report n°684, 6th February 1917(Maubeuge) and n°503, 17th January 1917 (Solesnes).

⁶⁹ ADN 9R745: German poster, Tourcoing, 12th August 1915.

⁷⁰ See, for example, ADHS 4M513: report n°1031, 16th March 1917. Mlle Desfontaines from Lille, nicknamed 'La Marquise,' possessed great influence at the *Kommandantur* but also had 'un service de correspondance organisé entre Lille et Bruxelles.' See also ADHS 4M513: report n°971, 13th March 1917.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, report n°965, 12th March 1917.

⁷² *Ibid.*, n°1185 and 1199, 23rd April 1917.

⁷³ *BdL*, n°15 (3rd January 1915), cited in Nivet, *France*, p.17.

défendue”. Piaule piaule! La correspondance continuera.⁷⁴ By proving that the Germans did not have complete control, and providing information and occasionally mirth, clandestine publications and correspondence reinforced the confidence of the *occupés* and thus constituted non-violent resistance.

Avoiding Work

Non-acquiescence to German demands for workers has already been mentioned. Here, the frequency and extent of such actions will be outlined. Refusing to work for the Germans comprised active resistance because of the choice being made, the open defiance it represented, and the punishments incurred. Further, in some cases refusal to work led people to hide from the Germans in a manner not too dissimilar to *maquisards* of the Second World War.

Refusal to work is considered one of the most widespread phenomena of the occupation. Becker states that ‘Par patriotisme, le refus du volontariat fut massif,’⁷⁵ and argues that in all occupied zones inhabitants refused to work for the enemy’s war effort, sometimes leading to forced labour.⁷⁶ Yet obligatory work posed new problems, proving considerably harder to resist, with most refusals carried out in vain.⁷⁷ Thus whilst the phenomenon of refusal was widespread, it was mainly limited to the early occupation;⁷⁸ later, instances never involved more than a handful of individuals at a time. This is not surprising given the brutal treatment of those refusing to work. Normal practice involved imprisonment – accompanied by a diet of bread and water or complete

⁷⁴ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 2nd January 1915.

⁷⁵ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.171.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.176.

⁷⁷ Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.214-15, 219.

⁷⁸ Isolated incidents of mass refusal did continue. For example, in March 1916 the *Kommandantur* of Lomme punished the commune for refusals to fabricate fences. AML 4H121: Prefect to Kommandant of Lomme, and Kommandant of Lomme to Mairie of Lomme, 18th March 1916.

deprivation of food⁷⁹ – threats and actual cases of shooting,⁸⁰ beatings,⁸¹ and general maltreatment and torture.⁸² The most infamous practice was the use of fields and the ‘poteau’: men were forced to stand – or were tied to a post – in a field and left for hours on end, often in cold or wet weather, sometimes naked or in their underwear. They were taken in again once they agreed to carry out work, usually signing an engagement of voluntary work.⁸³ It was reported in 1917 that at Saint-Saulve, 16-year-olds experienced this, and with every continued refusal to work, the wire attaching them to the post was tightened. Most only gave in ‘après avoir eu les mains en sang.’⁸⁴ Many were sent to work on the trenches or other front-line duties as further punishment,⁸⁵ mirroring the treatment of Allied prisoner-of-war forced labourers.⁸⁶

Despite this, some small-scale refusals did take place, even if only temporarily. This was the case in Templeuve, where in early July 1916, the Germans established a munitions depot, and ordered the municipality to provide 18 workers. The municipality refused, so the Germans responded with threats and demands for 30 workers. Faced with another refusal, the Germans forcibly rounded up men on 22nd July, threatening to shoot those

⁷⁹ ADHS 4M513: report n°519, 18th January 1917 (Sous le Bois); n°524, 18th January 1917 (St-Rémy-du-Nord); n°491, 16th January 1917 (Somme/Nord); n°481, 16th January 1917 (Roisies); ADN 9R252: ‘Déclaration du Pupille PIVION Emile [...],’ n.d.

⁸⁰ ADHS 4M513: report n°481, 16th January 1917 (Roisies); ADN 9R698: ‘Jeudi 14 Juin. Dourges. Rue de Fives’; Bukowski, ‘Cambrai,’ p.73.

⁸¹ ADHS 4M513: report n°522, 17th January 1917 (Nord); n°548, 19th January 1917 (Somme); AMT H4A32: Adjunct to mayor of Bondues to mayor of Tourcoing, 1st July 1915; ADN 9R252: ‘Déclaration du Pupille PIVION Emile,’ and Directeur de la Colonie de St Bernard to Prefect, 30th July 1916; Bukowski, ‘Cambrai,’ p.73.

⁸² ADHS 4M513: report n°625, 29th January 1917 (Aisne). Other evidence of torture can be found for Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Maubeuge, the Aisne, and the Somme, in n°840, 1st March 1917; n°665, 3rd February 1917; n°1000, 15th March 1917; n°685, 6th February 1917 – here, 3,500 people from Maubeuge were said to have been tortured. See also Redier, *Allemands*, p.271.

⁸³ This was reported in Valenciennes, Douai, Ferrière-la-Grande, Hautmont, Louvroil, Moeuvres, Maubeuge and other areas in the Nord. See *ibid.*, report n°773, 19th February 1917; n°780, 20th February 1917; n°514, 18th January 1917; n°522, 17th January 1917; n°528, 18th January 1917; n°518, 18th January 1917; n°493, 17th January 1917; n°1024, 16th March 1917; ADN 9R513: Commissaire de Police of Denain to Sous-Préfet of Valenciennes, 24th December 1918, p.9-10.

⁸⁴ ADHS 4M513: report n°737, 14th February 1917.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, report n°551, 19th January 1917 (Hirson); n°548, 19th January 1917 (Leval).

⁸⁶ Jones, *Violence*, p.140.

who resisted. Among these men were Louis Delebassée, Lucien Dhélin and Etienne Martin, and these three ‘opposèrent à toutes les tentatives d’embauchage la résistance la plus formelle.’ They were imprisoned; Delebassée was released after a week due to illness, but for 39 days ‘on expérimenta sur Martin et Dhélin toutes les trouvailles les plus ingénieuses de la répression allemande, sous forme de “prison dure” et de “prison noire”.’⁸⁷ In November 1916 the mayor of Templeuve asked the Prefect to inform the French government of their ‘courageuse attitude.’⁸⁸ The mayor had also aided Martin by providing him with an ID card and a job, with the hope of ‘le mettre à l’abri du racolage de la main d’œuvre.’⁸⁹

Further, another man had responded to the first call-up by hiding in the countryside, remaining untraceable for six weeks. The mayor believed that these four men honoured the commune by their ‘salutaire exemple de la résistance,’ even though three of them eventually gave in to ‘l’engrenage allemand.’ Everyone else around them contented themselves with the notion of ‘l’inanité de la résistance’ and passivity, and often criticised the four. Out of a sense of duty, these men risked life and liberty, ‘Et ce fait tout simple et [sic] malheureusement assez rare pour mériter d’être signalé.’ The mayor believed that Martin was the only man ‘de notre petite région’ who resisted victoriously, deserving to be especially honoured – he should receive compensation from the government when the time came.⁹⁰

The rarity of attempted resistance to forced labour, and the even less commonplace occurrence of successful resistance, is evident. In May 1917, another refusal occurred in Templeuve. 76 women were asked to work on German trenches; all refused, agreeing instead to work on agricultural tasks. However, two sisters refused ‘poliment, mais

⁸⁷ ADN 9R742: mayor of Templeuve to Prefect, 27th November 1916. ‘Prison dure’ meant a diet of bread and water; ‘prison noire’ meant deprivation of sunlight and a bed.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4th February 1917.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

catégoriquement' to work for the Germans in any form at all. They were threatened with deportation to Germany, but this was not carried out. The Germans confined the women to the outskirts of the town, trying for nine days to get them to engage in other tasks: 'L'offre des travaux de jardinage les plus bénins rencontra auprès d'elles une résistance souriante, mais irréductible.' The new *Kommandant* ('un fort brave homme') facilitated – initially – a more positive conclusion:

Ne pouvant reculer, puisqu'il avait reçu ses ordres, mais hésitant à prendre les grandes mesures, intérieurement obligé d'autre part d'admirer le rare esprit de devoir de ces jeunes filles, il proclama une fois de plus qu'en temps de guerre le travail est une règle ne souffrant aucune exception. Mais il finit par nous concéder qu'à l'extrême rigueur, si elles étaient employées par la commune, on pourrait fermer les yeux tout en affirmant que le principe était sauf.⁹¹

This was a temporary 'salut' for the women, who stated their logic: "Du moment où c'est pour des Français, nous serons balayees de rues, si on nous le demande." They did this for five weeks, but 'Malheureusement certaines femmes, sans avoir apporté les mêmes risques ou tenté aucune résistance, envièrent leur indépendance relative.' This led to a denunciation on 28th June during a roll-call of *ouvrières*, who said that 'elles se mettraient en grève si ces 2 personnes n'étaient pas contraintes au travail pour les allemands [sic].' The next day, the sisters were imprisoned and 'condamnées au pain sec et à l'eau.' Their philosophical response was: "On ne meurt pas pour manger du pain sec et boire de l'eau." Poor conditions led to one of them becoming seriously ill. They eventually appeared before a *Conseil de Guerre*, where other *occupés* labelled them as 'meneuses.' One was sentenced to two months' imprisonment and a 5,000-Mark fine, the other to a 2,500-Mark fine. Once again, the mayor asked that these individuals receive recognition and compensation after the liberation.⁹² No evidence of such compensation has been discovered.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, mayor of Templeuve to Prefect, 8th August 1917.

⁹² *Ibid.*

However, compensation was forthcoming for at least 27 *Nordistes* from various communes,⁹³ demonstrating the geographical scope but also the infrequent occurrence of this resistance. Nevertheless, refusing to work for the Germans was the most common reason for awarding a medal and/or financial compensation after the war. Also, some individuals were awarded the same compensation for being forced to work, rather than refusing to work.⁹⁴ Further, not all mayors were as accommodating as the mayor of Templeuve: the mayor of Saint-Rémy-Chaussée allegedly denounced a man who refused to work for the Germans and escaped from German labour.⁹⁵

The reasoning behind refusals echoes that of notable protests. One forced labourer wrote to his 'Chère Julie,' telling her: 'Plutôt la mort que de faire des tranchées. Nous sommes ici 500 civils lillois. Pas de traître parmi nous.'⁹⁶ Another wrote to his mother in June 1917:

Ce matin ils nous ont fait lever à 3 h. 15 et partir à 4 h. 15 pour aller travailler aux tranchées mais nous avons refusé, mais ils ont mis dans les trous 1 heure car, chère mère, je ne veux pas travailler pour tuer mes frères; ce soir ils vont nous donner des feuilles pour signer, mais nous allons répondre non.⁹⁷

Not everyone withstood the pressure – another forced labourer, evidently distraught, wrote that he and his comrades had been forced to build trenches 'pour tuer nos pères, nos frères et nos cousins.'⁹⁸

Yet for non-forced labourers, even absence from work was seen as a hostile act against the German army, punishable by up to a year's imprisonment.⁹⁹ A clear-cut refusal to work

⁹³ See documents in AN BB32/300 and AN F23/375.

⁹⁴ See, for example, AN F23/375: proposition en faveur de M. Barrat (Tourcoing), 27th September 1922 – awarded the *Médaille des Victimes de l'Invasion*, 3rd class.

⁹⁵ ADN 9R1193: Saint-Rémy Chaussée, Affaire Lescaillez, Procès-verbal of gendarmes Vernet and Salle, 31st March 1919, a.

⁹⁶ ADN 9R698: L. Den, forced labourer at Dourges, to Julie, 14th June [probably 1917].

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, F. Fromentin, forced labourer at Dourges, to his mother, 13th June 1917.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, n.a., n.d., 'Dourges. Place Wicar.'

was punished by up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 Marks, as those in Tourcoing who attempted to prevent men from working in June 1917 were reminded.¹⁰⁰ Some went beyond temporary absenteeism, however, opting instead for a life in hiding to avoid having to work for the Germans. Van der Meersch's character Alain did just this, and faced the wrath of fellow *occupés* who were angry at him for provoking the Germans – eventually they denounced him,¹⁰¹ just as with the sisters from Templeneuve above or in other real-life cases.¹⁰² Writing in particular about these *évadés*, van der Meersch noted that:

It was no unusual thing during the war to see young people deliberately outlaw themselves and, under the pressures of necessity, take to a life of novel and dangerous excitement as a result of which they got into bad company, became demoralised by long periods spent in German prisons, were corrupted, lost their social status, and sank beyond the hope of recovery, though their first step down the slippery slope took, more often than not, the form of an act of heroism.¹⁰³

Thus unrespectability, *mauvaise conduite*, and resistance were never completely separate from each other. This life of adventure and heroism did exist, and at least 11 *Nordistes* were given medals for such behaviour after the war. One man from Eppe-Sauvage successfully hid for three years; captured in July 1917, he was imprisoned for a year then sent to a forced labour battalion.¹⁰⁴ He was nominated for the *Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française*, but was only awarded the *Médaille des Victimes de l'Invasion*, 3rd class,¹⁰⁵ which all 11 received. Another man from Douai hid for two years,¹⁰⁶ a *Tourquennois* for one,¹⁰⁷ yet only two men remained undetected: one from Mouchin from February 1917 until the Armistice, another from Tourcoing from mid-1917 until

⁹⁹ ADN 9R745: German poster, Tourcoing, 14th May 1915.

¹⁰⁰ ADN 9R746: German poster, Tourcoing, 28th June 1917.

¹⁰¹ Van der Meersch, *Invasion*, p.47-8.

¹⁰² ADN 2U1/446: CAN, n°71, 16th October 1922; Odor and Rigole, 'Brassards rouges,' p.25-6.

¹⁰³ Van der Meersch, *Invasion*, p.45.

¹⁰⁴ AN F23/375: M. Balois, 4th May 1923.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, M. Balois, 2nd July 1923.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, M. Barbaux, 4th April 1923.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, M. Claisse, 5th March 1923.

the Armistice.¹⁰⁸ The remaining six hid successfully for at least a month each.¹⁰⁹ However ineffectual it was ultimately, resistance in the form of avoiding carrying out work for the Germans did occur; although this was always small-scale, usually individual, and was rarer than some have made out.

Crossing the Line

Civilians

The weight of occupation, including being forced to work against one's country, was too much to bear for certain individuals. They took evasion a step further, and attempted to escape the occupied area entirely, mostly in order to join the Allied armies and aid the war effort.¹¹⁰ Such a response to occupation was fairly widespread, and occurred throughout the four years. In Douai, in just two months of 1917, about 150-200 men succeeded in crossing the Belgian then Dutch borders, for which the town was punished.¹¹¹ Apparently, a Jesuit priest helped these men, giving them false *laissez-passer* – he was responsible for aiding 500 men to get to Holland before being denounced and imprisoned.¹¹² Denunciations of those involved in such resistance were relatively commonplace.¹¹³ Occasionally, the Germans used *agents-provocateurs* who claimed to be *passeurs* offering safe passage to Holland, only to arrest and imprison the men who took up the offer. This led to the arrest of over 70 Frenchmen in Denain.¹¹⁴ However impressive such numbers may be, they never reached the heights of the Belgian analogue.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, M. Cloart, 10th March 1923; M. Vinckier, 12th December 1922.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, M. Lagache; M. Ostin (Mouvaux), 31st August 1922; M. Thuysbaert (Tourcoing), 23rd November 1922; M. Vanden Bosch (Tourcoing), 23rd November 1922; M. Vanlaethem (Tourcoing), 23rd November 1922; M. Vernhenne (Tourcoing), 28th December 1922.

¹¹⁰ People were punished for this – ADN 9R720: German poster, Roubaix, 29th August 1917.

¹¹¹ ADHS 4M513: report n°1024, 16th March 1917.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, report n°1074, 21st March 1917.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, report n°1185, 23rd April 1917 (Roubaix); ADN 9R1229: Râches, complaints against the mayor, procès-verbal of Débarcaus and Hatte, 17th February 1919.

¹¹⁴ ADHS 4M513: report n°799, 23rd February 1917; ADN 9R513: Commissaire de Police of Denain to Sous-Préfet of Valenciennes, 24th December 1918, p.9.

About 32,000 Belgians managed to reach the army of Yser via Holland,¹¹⁵ despite similar problems of denunciations¹¹⁶ – although they of course did not have as far a journey.

Priests also played a role in Denain,¹¹⁷ and Cambrai, where in February 1917, ‘beaucoup de jeunes gens cherchent a [sic] regagner par la Hollande les lignes Françaises [sic]; ils voyagent la nuit. A cet effet il existe une organisation secrète; ces jeunes gens se dissimulent le jour dans les presbytères et les prêtres les recueillent et facilitent leur évacion.’¹¹⁸ Holland was central to any escape – apart from one story of forced labourers at the front making their way towards the British during an advance¹¹⁹ – and was also one of the major territories for spies during the war.¹²⁰

German ordinances hint at an authority responding to and attempting to gain control of a genuine problem.¹²¹ In Valenciennes, a poster of October 1915 highlighted cases of attempted escape. The German perception of the logic behind such attempts was ‘la crainte d’encourir, à la conclusion de la paix, des punitions sévères par les autorités françaises pour avoir manqué d’entrer, présentement au service de l’armée.’ The German authority stated that no military tribunal could legally or morally make such a judgement, and that it was ‘persuadée que l’intelligence et le bon sens de la population vont s’opposer énergiquement à ces idées erronées et déraisonnables et servir à empêcher toute tentative de se soustraire au contrôle dans l’intérêt même des contrôlés.’¹²² In reality, attempts to escape were probably motivated more by a genuine desire to join the French army or simply to reach unoccupied France, than by a fear of post-war French

¹¹⁵ De Schaeprijver, *La Belgique*, p.123.

¹¹⁶ Van Ypersele, ‘La répression,’ p.5.

¹¹⁷ ADN 9R513: Commissaire de Police of Denain to Sous-Préfet of Valenciennes, 24th December 1918, p.9.

¹¹⁸ ADHS 4M513: report n°736, 14th February 1917.

¹¹⁹ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 13th April 1917.

¹²⁰ See documents in SHD 19N547.

¹²¹ *BdL*, n°169, ‘Actes de l’Autorité allemande: Proclamation du Général Commandant l’Armée du 25 November 1915, en vertu de l’Ordre du 1^{er} Avril 1916,’ point 9b, article 10.

¹²² ADN 9R745: German poster, Valenciennes, 2nd October 1915.

judicial reprisals. Some men may have felt it was their duty to at least try to join the army; other *occupés* occasionally looked down on those who had made no attempt. *Rapatriés* from Caudry bemoaned that with the number of *mobilisables* remaining there, two whole army divisions could be formed.¹²³ Similarly, Blin noted in February 1918:

Trop de mobilisables n'ayant pu réussir à quitter notre région ont accepté trop facilement une situation qui les mettait à l'abri des dangers de la guerre [...] Le devoir était d'essayer de gagner l'Angleterre par la Hollande. Passer ou être pris; les moyens n'ont pas manqué pour s'évader et beaucoup de "décidés" y sont parvenus.¹²⁴

Further sources suggest that leaving the occupied area was easier than might be expected.¹²⁵ *The Times* reported that its own correspondent left occupied France via Belgium and Holland in December 1914, by bribing Germans.¹²⁶ However, in 1917 *rapatriés* from Valenciennes, Saint-Saulve and Anzin complained that the copies of *Le Petit Journal* and *Le Matin* which occasionally appeared in the occupied area sometimes detailed the ruses people used to escape. These publications implied that doing so was easy, involving a simple bribe to German sentries. The result was an increase in the number of sentries, thus making escape harder in reality.¹²⁷ Indeed, a clandestine letter sent to London in 1916 stated that although many men attempted to escape to Belgium, only some succeeded – the rest were killed like rabbits, every week.¹²⁸ This was true: in Douai, a man tried to leave the occupied area by dressing as a woman, but was shot dead at Hénin Liétard.¹²⁹ A handful of people received (sometimes posthumous) honorary compensation from the French government after the war for such attempts.¹³⁰

¹²³ ADHS 4M513: report n°722, 13th February 1917.

¹²⁴ ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 11th February 1918.

¹²⁵ ADN J1933: Rouesel manuscript, 'Les évasions par la Hollande'; Maucière, *L'Orage*, p. 52-5; Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.18.

¹²⁶ *The Times* (22nd December 1914).

¹²⁷ ADHS 4M513: report n°737, 14th February 1917.

¹²⁸ ADN 74J223: X from Lille to M. Besegher, Noisy le Sec, 20th April 1916.

¹²⁹ ADHS 4M513: report n°1267, 28th April 1917.

¹³⁰ See, for example, AN F23/375: M. Poulain (Valenciennes), 5th October 1922; AN F23/377: M. Rousselle (Bousbecques), n.d.; M. Gabet (Bertry), n.d.; M. Marchand (Mons-en-Barœul), n.d.

Those wishing to reach unoccupied France were aided by *passeurs*, as in the Second World War.¹³¹ These people were not always perceived as unequivocal resisters, and were often held in suspicion by the population, just as with fraudsters – some *were* fraudsters.¹³² This scepticism extended to non-occupied French authorities: M. Aliotte from Vieux-Condé had helped young men reach Holland during the occupation, and was subsequently nominated for the *Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française* after the war; his case was rejected, as despite his courageous conduct concerning such men, he had also been imprisoned for 15 months for theft!¹³³ Others were considerably more respectable, such as Princesse Marie de Croÿ of Bellignies.¹³⁴ Whatever their motives, these guides also helped to transport an even more dangerous ‘cargo’: Allied servicemen.

Allied Servicemen

Whether soldiers having lagged behind the retreat of 1914, escaped prisoners of war, or downed airmen, there were a surprising number of Allied servicemen who wanted to avoid the Germans in occupied France. Such men had two options: remain in hiding until the end of the war, or attempt to return to Allied lines. Often the two were combined, with servicemen hiding for a certain period and eventually escaping. Harbours Allied servicemen – providing them with food, clothes, shelter, or medical care – and aiding them to escape was one of the most explicit forms of resistance.¹³⁵ It was also one of the most risky: Allied servicemen behind German lines were supposed to give themselves up immediately, and the population had to inform the Germans of such men. Any serviceman found in civilian clothes would be killed, and any civilian who had

¹³¹ Foot, *Resistance*, p.9; Taylor, *Between*, p.65-8; Michael R. Marrus, ‘Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust,’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 30: 1 (January 1995), p.99.

¹³² See, for example, ADHS 4M513: report n°944, 9th March 1917 (Fourmies).

¹³³ AN BB32/3: Ministère de la Justice, Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française, proposition concernant M. Émile Aliotte, 28th March 1923. However, two other members of his family were nominated for the medal, and one definitely received it – the other most probably did, but the exact document is missing in the archives.

¹³⁴ ADHS 4M513: report n°1084, 23rd March 1917 (Bellignies and Bavay).

¹³⁵ Thébaud, *Femme*, p.61.

aided them would be guilty of treason and punished accordingly.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, many *occupés* did aid Allied servicemen – one of the most well known and commonly documented acts of occupation resistance,¹³⁷ for which numerous archival sources provide evidence across the Nord.¹³⁸ Unsurprisingly, communes closest to the front saw more examples of this, so many cases took place outside the Nord, especially in Saint-Quentin.¹³⁹ Clearly, for the Germans this was resistance, and many French people also recognised such acts as resistance or at least patriotic opposition.¹⁴⁰ So too did the British and French governments both during¹⁴¹ and after the war.¹⁴²

Attitudes to Allied servicemen altered over time: in Douai, among the 20 soldiers in hiding was André Cochain. Initially looked after by the Desplanque family, who had two sons at the front, he was treated like one of their sons. He stayed with them until February 1915, when he feared denunciation by a woman who had five children at the front. Consequently, he moved hiding places, staying with Mme Lévy. For the first few months, she ‘fut très bonne pour lui, et secourait aussi les blessés et soldats français,’ but

¹³⁶ *BdL*, n°169, ‘Actes de l’Autorité allemande: Proclamation du Général Commandant l’Armée du 25 November 1915, en vertu de l’Ordre du 1^{er} Avril 1916,’ point 4-6. See also ADN 9R746: German poster, Roubaix and Tourcoing, 4th September 1916.

¹³⁷ Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.71; Mauclère, *L’Orage*, p.12; Van der Meersch, *Invasion*, p.40-1; Thébaud, *Femme*, p.61.

¹³⁸ See, for example, NA KV 2/844: intelligence report on Georges Gaston Quien, account of Mme L’Hotelier, Directrice of the Hospice Générale of Cambrai, 28th November 1918; ADN 9R799: German poster, Halluin, April 1917; ADHS 4M513: report n°474, Annemasse, 12th January 1917 (Cambrai); n°582, 24th January 1917 (Le Cateau); n°672, 5th February 1917 (Péronne); n°1202, 24th April 1917 (Haubourdin).

¹³⁹ See Fleury, *Sous la botte*, vol. I, p.65, 85-6, 112, and vol. II, p.12, 89-91; NA FO383/261: Foreign Office: Prisoners of War and Aliens Department: General Correspondence from 1906: France: Prisoners (1917) – 13-page summary of Abbé Deschodt’s resistance, n.d., n.a.

¹⁴⁰ One work depicted this resistance from the perspective of deported children in Germany: Pierre Suroust, *Gros Boches et petits Français: Tragi-comédie en trois actes* (Paris, 1921).

¹⁴¹ NA FO383/380: Prisoners of War and Aliens Department – General Correspondence: France, Prisoners (1918) – French Ambassador in London [to Foreign Office], 4th March 1918, and Government Committee on the Treatment by the Enemy of British Prisoners of War to Secretary of the Prisoner of War Department, 1st February 1918, and related documents.

¹⁴² Tierce, *Between*, p.91; AN BB32/300: Ernst Beurrier to M. Bersy, 10th February 1924; secrétaire général civil de la présidence de la République to Garde des Sceaux, 26th January 1920; AN F23/375: M. Drouin (Cappelle), n.d.; M. Dubreu (Roubaix), n.d.; M. Duterte (Marquette-lez-Lille), 15th June 1923; M. Gilliaux (Sains-du-Nord), 27th March 1923; M. Pagnier (Bachant), 14th November 1922; M. Longlade (Valenciennes), n.d.; AN F23/377: M. Pique (Vendegies sur Ecaillon), n.d.

soon ‘elle fit la connaissance d’officiers allemands; ceux-ci fréquentaient son salon et parfois restaient chez elle à une heure très avancée de la nuit.’ By mid-1916, after she had met with high-ranking Germans, including members of *Kronprinz* Ruprecht of Bavaria’s staff, Cochain no longer felt safe, and left without telling Lévy.¹⁴³ This case highlights the blurred line between resistance and *mauvaise conduite* the *occupés* walked. It also suggests that as the occupation went on, a certain amount of complicity with the Germans may have been necessary for survival, thus resistance lessened.

To facilitate the passage of Allied servicemen out of the occupied area, some created organised escape networks, precursors to those of World War II. One of the most famous examples was the *Comité Jacquet*: based in Lille, its leaders were Eugène Jacquet, Georges Maertens, Ernest Deconnink, and Belgian Sylvère Verhulst. These men aided at least 200 Allied servicemen, many of whom they also helped escape across the Belgian and Dutch borders.¹⁴⁴ They carried out their actions with the knowledge and assistance of numerous other *occupés*, who kept their secret, provided shelter and food, or actively led men across the border.¹⁴⁵ The downfall of the *Comité* was the ‘Mapplebeck’ affair: in March 1915, English aviator Corporal Mapplebeck was attacked and had to make a forced landing on the outskirts of Lille. The *Comité* provided him with nourishment and shelter, eventually assisting him in escaping the occupied area. Once returned to his unit, Mapplebeck went on a sortie over Lille and dropped a note, humorously thanking von Heinrich for his hospitality. Mapplebeck was doubly foolish, as he had kept a diary during his time in Lille, and hid it in Jacquet’s house.¹⁴⁶ He started a chain of events ending in the execution of all four members of the *Comité* on 22nd September 1915, and the arrest of over 200 others suspected of involvement. Jacquet himself expressed shock

¹⁴³ ADHS 4M513: report n°1050, 17th March 1917.

¹⁴⁴ ADN 9R656 (Musée 352): unfinished account of the Affaire Mapplebeck, by Jacquet.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, AN F23/375: M. Delefosse (Lille), 27th March 1923; ADN 9R1242: notes from Lille’s municipal council, 18th January 1919; Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, p.46.

¹⁴⁶ For more details on the *Comité*, see documents in ADN 9R656 (Musée 352); Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, p.47-62; Bardou, *Eugène Jacquet*; Deruyk, *La mort*; Trochon, *Lille*, p.228-32; Gromaire, *L’Occupation*, p.360; Wallart, *Nord*, p.45.

at the consequences of the Mapplebeck affair: 'Jamais je n'aurais cru qu'une affaire qui m'était tombée par le hasard serait devenue aussi lourde et m'aurait amené de tels ennuis!'¹⁴⁷

The manner in which the *Comité* members faced their death demonstrates much about the intent of such resisters. In a joint letter to their friends, the four men wrote:

Mes chers amis, camarades
Nous voilà au but! Dans quelques instants nous serons fusillés.
Nous allons mourir bravement en bons Français, en brave Belge.
Debout! Les yeux non bandés, les mains libres
Adieu à tous et courage
Vive la République
Vive la France.¹⁴⁸

They perceived their sentence as a sacrifice for France, highlighting the strength of their patriotism and the sense of duty which led them to carry out such actions.¹⁴⁹ Yet within their actions there also lay an element of respectability, which Jacquet himself was keen to reinforce in his last letter to his wife and family: 'Nous sommes acquittés du fait d'espionnage. C'est assez juste. L'ANGLETERRE aura donc à faire son devoir envers vous.'¹⁵⁰ Jacquet also reinforced the vision of his actions as a duty to France: 'LA NATION sera là, les Amis aussi, et tu pourras dire que ton Mari est mort comme un bon Soldat [sic] face à l'ennemi, sans avoir jamais tremblé!'¹⁵¹

The population of Lille were informed of the execution via a poster.¹⁵² The entire affair, particularly the perceived heroic-sacrificial ending, had a profound effect on the population of Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing, evidenced by the frequency with which diarists

¹⁴⁷ ADN 9R656 (Musée 353): unfinished account of the Affaire Mapplebeck, by Jacquet.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, last letter of the *fusillés lillois*, 22nd September 1915. Original emphasis.

¹⁴⁹ For further analysis of the letters of executed resisters, see Emmanuel Debruyne and Laurence van Ypersele, *Je serai fusillé demain: dernières lettres des patriotes belges et français fusillés par l'Occupant, 1914-1918* (Brussels, 2011).

¹⁵⁰ These words were repeated in *The Times* (18th February 1916).

¹⁵¹ ADN 9R656 (Musée 353): Jacquet to his wife and children, 21st September 1915.

¹⁵² ADN 9R716: German poster, Lille, 22nd September 1915.

mentioned these events.¹⁵³ The German sentence was undoubtedly aimed to discourage a repetition of the *Comité's* actions, but above all it made martyrs out of the four men. Surprisingly quickly, the story of the *Comité* reached beyond the occupied area,¹⁵⁴ and by the end of the occupation it had become legendary (see the next chapter).

A similarly celebrated case was that of Louise de Bettignies and her accomplices, such as Louise Thuliez,¹⁵⁵ Léonie Vanhoutte,¹⁵⁶ and many others¹⁵⁷ – one estimate puts the number of collaborators at 80.¹⁵⁸ De Bettignies was in fact working for and financed by both British and French intelligence,¹⁵⁹ and created the *service Alice*,¹⁶⁰ so called after her codename, Alice Dubois. The *service* comprised an escape network, but she and other members also engaged in espionage, transmitting military intelligence such as train and troop movements to the Allies.¹⁶¹ Their network was more comprehensive than that of Jacquet, lasting longer, and succeeded in joining together two pre-existing networks.¹⁶² It was responsible for the successful escape of about 1,000 servicemen.¹⁶³ The full story of de Bettignies and her network is fascinating.¹⁶⁴ Like the *Comité Jacquet*, many members of de Bettignies's network were eventually discovered and punished by the Germans. De

¹⁵³ ADN 74J241: Dumont papers, 12th and 27th July, and 22nd September 1915; ADN 74J225: Blin diary, 22nd September 1915; ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 24th September 1915; Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 26th July and 22nd September 1915, and Hirsch diary, 21st September 1915, p.183, 186 and 244.

¹⁵⁴ *The Times* (14th and 18th February 1916).

¹⁵⁵ Louise Thuliez, *Condamnée à mort* (Paris, 1933); AML 4H78: *L'Écho*, 27th March 1919; McPhail, *Silence*, p.138-27; Thébaud, *Femme*, p.61-3.

¹⁵⁶ Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.194 (spelt Van Houtte); Olivier Forcade, 'L'espionnage féminin ou un nouvel héroïsme au combat en 1914-1918,' in Trévisi and Nivet, *Les femmes*, p.368-9; Antoine Redier, *La guerre des femmes: Histoire de Louise de Bettignies et de ses compagnes* (Paris, 1930), p.33-65. Redier eventually married Vanhoutte – Deruyk, *Louise*, p.55.

¹⁵⁷ ADN 16J99: Memoirs of Madeleine Berroyer de November 1914 à Juin 1916; Molina, 'Les femmes,' p.19; Dejardin, 'Tourcoing,' p.46-7.

¹⁵⁸ Wallart, *Nord*, p.47.

¹⁵⁹ Deruyk, *Louise*, p.101.

¹⁶⁰ Known by the British as the 'Ramble' network: Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.139.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*; Wallart, *Nord*, p.47.

¹⁶² Deruyk, *Louise*, p.60.

¹⁶³ Forcade, 'L'espionnage,' p.368-9.

¹⁶⁴ See Redier, *La guerre*; Deruyk, *Louise*; Antier et al., *Espionnes*, pp.138-42 and 194-5; Maucière, *L'Orage*, p.66-9, 87, 107-8; Nivet, 'Femmes,' pp.293-6; McPhail, *Silence*, p.147-55; Thébaud, *Femme*, p.63; Proctor, *Intelligence*, pp.116-119.

Bettignies herself was arrested in October 1915 and died in prison on 27th September 1918,¹⁶⁵ thus the many honours she received were posthumous.¹⁶⁶ It is noticeable that many of these celebrated resisters were caught in 1915, after which active resistance was more difficult and thus less frequent.

Some French escape networks tied in with Belgian ones. Thus men aided in France by de Bettignies were helped further in Belgium by Edith Cavell¹⁶⁷ – indeed, Thuliez worked with both women. As such, patriotism for a single homeland may not have been central to the motivations of these resisters, although the Belgian-French border had always been a fluid one, and the wartime alliance further reinforced notions of shared identities.

Not all *occupés* were willing to incur the risks involved in harbouring and assisting Allied personnel. Many engaging in this form of resistance were denounced, which occurred in particular in Lille, Le Cateau, Roubaix, La Polie, Fourmies, and Haubourdin, and beyond the Nord.¹⁶⁸ The *Comité Jacquet* had been denounced, and the suspected denunciator of Cavell may have been involved in damasking the *service Alice*.¹⁶⁹ In Cambrai, the *Directrice* of the *Hospice Général* helped 100 French soldiers return to France, but was denounced by two Frenchmen and a French woman, and condemned to

¹⁶⁵ Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.142.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.197; NA WO/372/23 (image 1664): Medal card for Louise de Bettignies, awarded OBE; Nivet, 'Femmes,' pp.319-21; *The Times* (24th February 1920).

¹⁶⁷ For more on Cavell, see: IWM 2482 Con Shelf & P114/2: Private papers of Edith Cavell; IWM PST 6318: Proclamation, Belgium, October 1915; IWM 7501 75/93/1: Private papers of D.J. Tunmore; de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.123-5; Thébaud, *Femme*, p.61-3; Nivet, 'Femmes,' p.296-8; Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.194-5; Darrow, *French Women*, p.276; Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.100-106.

¹⁶⁸ Tierce, *Between*, p.22-3, 37-8; ADHS 4M513: report n°582, 24th January 1917; n°672, 27th January 1917; n°1202, 24th April 1917; US NA Record Group 120, Entry 198: Report I(b) 259, 1918, concerning M. Delrue from Roubaix. For examples outside the Nord, see: ADHS 4M513: report n°1102, 26th March 1917; ADN 9R1197: Sobre-le-Château, Triage de St Quentin, Déclaration de M. Mollet, du 4^oRIT, se retirant à Fourmies, 12th December 1918.

¹⁶⁹ Wallart, *Nord*, p.45; NA KV2/844: documents on Gaston Quien; *The Times* (30th August 1919).

ten years' imprisonment.¹⁷⁰ Some may have denounced others out of fear of German reprisals if they discovered the men themselves. Others may have wanted to win German favour, to improve their personal situation, or to enact vengeance. These denunciations had severe consequences, including the death penalty for the denounced.¹⁷¹ Consequently, some denunciators were punished after the war.¹⁷²

What was the overall intent behind, and effect of, harbouring Allied personnel and escape networks? Given the high numbers of men killed in Western Front battles, the number of Allied servicemen – or potential servicemen in the form of civilian males – who successfully escaped the occupied zone seems relatively small, and it is questionable whether their presence in the Allied military would have turned the tide of battle. However, in aiding such men, *occupés* asserted their patriotism, their humanitarianism, their willingness to defy the Germans, and their wish for an Allied victory. They also adhered to their principles, reconfiguring their moral-patriotic compass so that for them their actions were always justified, falling within respectability, much like the belligerents' very genuine belief that they had 'right' and law on their side.¹⁷³

Returning soldiers to Allied lines was a minor moral-patriotic victory which *occupés* linked inextricably to the Allied victory. There was, for this and other forms of resistance, a non-military value to the actions, which could take on new meanings in the inter-war period. However, for some, like de Bettignies, the victory was even more real because they were actively working *for* the Allies – they were themselves participating in the war.

¹⁷⁰ ADHS 4M513: report n°474; NA KV2/844: account of Mme L'Hotelier, Directrice of the Hospice Général of Cambrai, 28th November 1918; Ramirez, 'Les villes,' p.26.

¹⁷¹ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.266.

¹⁷² ADN 2U1/445: Mme Rappé, Mlle Delhaye and Mme Delhaye dossier.

¹⁷³ See Annie Deperchin, 'La Justice.'

Espionage and Allied Secret Services

The Allies were naturally interested in the information that *occupés* could provide them, and subsequently recruited numerous people like de Bettignies, often refugees and *rapatriés* sent back to their locality.¹⁷⁴ In occupied France and Belgium (and Luxembourg), 6,000-6,400 individuals worked for Allied secret services in espionage and escape networks.¹⁷⁵ Most operated in Belgium but some, like members of *La Dame Blanche*, crossed into the Nord.¹⁷⁶ Each 'service' contained about 20-30 people, with the largest ones working for the British,¹⁷⁷ although there was considerable competition for recruitment among Allied secret services, even among the various branches of the British intelligence services.¹⁷⁸

Yet it was not easy to recruit people to engage in activity 'aussi déconsidérée que l'espionnage.'¹⁷⁹ The *occupés* were, as ever, concerned with social respectability, and to enter into these *services*, the pejorative connotation of espionage had to be removed.¹⁸⁰ Both occupied and non-occupied French people during the war (especially in 1914) experienced spy-mania, a psychosis about spies, epitomised by the Mata Hari affair.¹⁸¹ The French Secret Service collected considerable documentation on suspected spies during the war.¹⁸² For many, a gendered understanding of espionage meant it was seen

¹⁷⁴ Janet Morgan, *The Secrets of Rue St Roch: Intelligence Operations Behind Enemy Lines in the First World War* (London, 2004), p.11-12.

¹⁷⁵ NA WO106/45: Defence and operational plans, History of Secret Service and Intelligence Organisations – 'R' (Lieutenant-Colonel R.J. Drake, I(b) GHQ), 'History of I(b), January 1917-April 1919,' 5th May 1919, p.33; Debruyne and Paternostre, *La Résistance*, p.20; Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.95.

¹⁷⁶ Olivier Forcade, 'L'espionnage,' p.369-70; Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.75; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.263; Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.144-5.

¹⁷⁷ Debruyne and Paternostre, *La Résistance*, p.19-20.

¹⁷⁸ Morgan, *Rue St Roch*, especially p.24 and 175; Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.75-6.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.21.

¹⁸⁰ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.265.

¹⁸¹ Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.43-6, 74-103; Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.126-31; Forcade, 'L'espionnage,' p.364-6; Julie Wheelwright, *The Fatal Lover: Mata Hari and the Myth of Women in Espionage* (London, 1992).

¹⁸² See all of ADHS 3M324 and SHD 19N547.

as feminine and negative,¹⁸³ relying on seduction and betrayal. Indeed, many spies during the war were female, especially agents in the occupied area, and it was not uncommon for them to be labelled by certain people as prostitutes, among other typologies.¹⁸⁴ The perception of 'loose' women and prostitutes as potential spies by fellow *occupés* has already been mentioned; the occupied populations differed little from their free compatriots in this respect. However, the idea of a traitorous spy like Hari was accompanied by that of a patriotic spy, or spy-martyr,¹⁸⁵ such as Marthe Richer/Richard.¹⁸⁶ Still, those working for the British in occupied Belgium wanted to be recognised as soldiers, not 'vulgar' spies,¹⁸⁷ echoing somewhat the sentiment of Jacquet's last letter. Tammy Proctor argues that, given that female espionage was portrayed as a hidden evil tied to sexuality, after the war female Allied agents in the occupied territories were largely forgotten because they fit neither the 'horizontal collaborator' nor the 'martyred victim' label.¹⁸⁸ Olivier Focarde agrees that such women were seen as victims first, then resisters.¹⁸⁹ Male agents faced fewer questions as to their motives and respectability, and although many men did engage in espionage, the understanding of spying as mainly feminine lasted throughout the occupation.

The initial decision to engage in espionage for the Allies represented a desire to contribute in some way to an Allied victory and subsequent liberation of their homeland. Some agents working for the Allied secret services were paid, whereas others refused to accept money except operational costs.¹⁹⁰ Motives varied from a sense of adventure, financial gain, a certain freedom (especially for women), to patriotic, religious and moral

¹⁸³ Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.30.

¹⁸⁴ Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.47-53.

¹⁸⁵ Proctor, *Intelligence*, pp.99-110.

¹⁸⁶ Focarde, 'L'espionnage,' p.364-6; Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.65-70; Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.131; Georges Ladoux, *Martha Richard, The Skylark, The Foremost Women Spy of France*, (London, 1932), (ed.) Warrington Dawson; Raymond Bernard (dir.), *Marthe Richard: Espionne au service de la France* (Studio Canal, 1937).

¹⁸⁷ Proctor, *Intelligence*, p.78-9.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.137.

¹⁸⁹ Focarde, 'L'espionnage,' p.272.

¹⁹⁰ History of I(b), p.14-15.

conviction.¹⁹¹ Agents in the occupied area were perceived by the British to have been, generally, working for patriotic reasons; and they hailed from diverse social classes, from priests and gendarmes to seamstresses, smugglers, and railway officials.¹⁹² These agents were trained and sent to occupied France and Belgium via balloons and parachutes.¹⁹³ Their job was observation: watching railway lines,¹⁹⁴ and noting down information on military units. Many other *occupés*, probably at the instigation of Allied agents, engaged in this task, including entire families taking shifts at observation posts.¹⁹⁵

In the Nord, it is hard to evaluate the total number of people who engaged in this resistance, but there is evidence of Allied agents and espionage networks operating here.¹⁹⁶ In June 1915, Blin allegedly spoke with a French secret agent,¹⁹⁷ which seems probable. For example, agents Lefebvre and Faux had been dropped by the British at Vieux-Condé by balloon on the night of 26-7th February 1917. They sent a pigeon back on the 27th asking for more pigeons, but the RFC could not fulfil the request due to bad weather conditions.¹⁹⁸ In the meantime, according to a *rapatrié*, Lefebvre had given many women of Condé news of their mobilised husbands. One local woman denounced him, but Lefebvre himself ‘was not very audacious, and when arrested, soon confessed and denounced his accomplice.’¹⁹⁹ Like all belligerents, the Germans took espionage very

¹⁹¹ Antier et al., *Espionnes*, p.10-11, 46.

¹⁹² History of I(b), p.33.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*; Morgan, *Rue St Roch*, p.15-17.

¹⁹⁴ Morgan, *Rue St Roch*, p.29-30 and 39-40; History of I(b), p.6 and 13; Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.264; Debarge, ‘Fourmies occupée,’ p.307.

¹⁹⁵ Debruyne and Paternostre, *La Résistance*, p.21.

¹⁹⁶ AN BB32/1: M. Afchain (Caudry), 16th June 1921; AN F23/375: Mme Durand (Recquignies), 6th November 1922; AN F23/377: M. Feu Masse (Marcoing), n.d.; M. Demoulin (Villers-en-Cauchies), n.d.

¹⁹⁷ ADN 9R225: Blin diary, 6th June 1915.

¹⁹⁸ NA WO106/45: G.H.Q. I(b), ‘British agent Lefebvre,’ 28th May 1918.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, G.H.Q. I(b), Lieut. IO, ‘Allied Agent LEFEBVRE alias “LE NUSSE” of BRUAY,’ 23rd May 1918.

seriously,²⁰⁰ thus both Levebvre and Faux were condemned to death, and executed on 31st January 1918.²⁰¹

Another death was that of British agent Jules Bar, a miner from Trith-Saint-Léger, near Valenciennes. Captured after jumping from a British plane, he was executed on 26th June 1917. In his last letter, Bar noted that he left behind other members of his network, and echoed the sentiments of Jacquet: 'Je mourrai sans peur, car je crois avoir fait mon devoir [...] Je marcherai au poteau sans faiblesse, car je veux faire voir aux Allemands comment un Français sait mourir pour sa Patrie.'²⁰² It is not clear whether Bar's network survived him.

Janet Morgan argues that none of the agent-balloonists sent into France by the British in December 1917 and January 1918 had been able to set up a network, and many died.²⁰³ Such plans included the creation of a service 'L.L.' to monitor railway movements on the line Sallaumines-Billy-Montigny-Hénin-Liétard, and the line Lens-Beaumont-Douai. This information was to be transmitted to GHQ. A similar 'service G.G.' for Hénin-Liétard was to be created.²⁰⁴ It is not known if these plans came to fruition. Nevertheless, after the war, the British I(b) considered such networks to have been extremely useful: 'This information was of vital importance in drawing up the enemy's order of battle. It had a direct effect on the operations and movements of our own forces, and became therefore the first objective of our Secret Service.'²⁰⁵ Despite such praise, it is unlikely that this resistance actually turned the tide of any battles, given the nature of trench warfare.

²⁰⁰ ADN 9R705: German poster, 'ESPIONNAGE,' Lomme, 2nd April 1917.

²⁰¹ NA WO106/45: G.H.Q I(b) report from Évian-les-Bains, 23rd May 1918, testimony of M. Malaise from Condé-sur-l'Escaut.

²⁰² ADN 15J85: Commune of Avesnelles, response to the Commission Historique du Nord questionnaire, 7th August 1922.

²⁰³ Morgan, *Rue St Roch*, p.192.

²⁰⁴ NA WO106/45: documents on Service 'L.L.' and 'G.G,' n.d., n.a.

²⁰⁵ History of I(b), p.6.

In Lille, Belgian teenager Léon Trulin and his friends photographed military installations and passed on the information to the Allies.²⁰⁶ Denounced by a friend, Trulin was executed on 8th November 1918.²⁰⁷ As with the *Comité Jacquet*, Trulin's case became rapidly well-known, seen as emblematic of occupation resistance:²⁰⁸ Martin-Mamy described him as 'un soldat sans uniforme.'²⁰⁹ Other *Nordiste* agents were decorated by the British government.²¹⁰ Some were punished by the Germans – although not all were genuine spies²¹¹ – for transmitting information to the Allies and were thus later rewarded by the French government.²¹² Spying was therefore reconfigured from a dishonourable action to a respectable one worthy of official praise, although the local populations rarely expressed their opinion on Allied spies. The aid they offered such agents during the occupation suggests that they had accepted Allied intelligence operations as legitimate, as opposed to treasonous, unrespectable, pro-German spying. However, lacking the performative aspect of respectable resistance, espionage could never be as widespread or acceptable as the former.

²⁰⁶ AN F 23/377: documents on Raymond Denain (Marcq-en-Barœul), an accomplice of Trulin.

²⁰⁷ ADHS 4M513: report n°937, 10th March 1917(Lille) and n°1164, 20th April 1917 (Lille); ADN 74J224: Trollin diary, 8th November 1915; ADN 9R656: Mangold, Conseiller du Tribunal de Guerre to l'Etat-Civil de la Mairie de Lille, 11th November 1915.

²⁰⁸ Becker, *Journaux*, Degnitère diary, 8th November 1915, p.246; ADN 9R584: report seemingly by the Commissaire de Police of Lille, 12th November 1918; Redier, *Allemands*, p.307; Wallart, *Nord*, p.46; Deruyk, *Louise*, p.58; Auriol, *Ténèbres*, p.119.

²⁰⁹ Martin-Mamy, *Quatre ans*, p.131-148, especially p.138.

²¹⁰ See documents in NA WO106/6192: War Office: Directorate of Military Operations and Military Intelligence, and predecessors: Correspondence and Papers: Honours and awards to named French, Belgian and Dutch Secret Service agents (1919-23). French agents received 4 OBEs, 22 MBEs, 71 Military Division and 2 Civilian Division medals. Some came from *Nordiste* communes of Trélon, Glageon, Roubaix, Fourmies, Wattrelos, Avesnes, Lille, Tourcoing, Marcoing, Noyelles-sur-Escaut, Villers-en-Cauchies, Cambrai, Anzin, Bermerain, Wallers, Vieux-Condé, Condé-sur-Escaut, Croix, Normain-près-Orchies, Hautmont, St-Amand-les-Eaux, Lomme, and Valenciennes.

²¹¹ Some were falsely accused of espionage. See AN F23/375: M. Bugnicourt (Clary,) n.d.; M. Jacquemin (Anzin), 28th May 1923; M. l'abbé Charlet, from Douai, to Ministre de la Justice, 22nd August 1922.

²¹² *Ibid.*, Mme Dhalluin (Roubaix), 13th July 1923; M. Hamy (Lille), n.d.; Mme Huyghe, 11th September 1922; M. Waxin (Haubourdin), 23rd January 1923; AN F23/377: M. Pagnien (Wasquehal), n.d.; M. Touchart (Neuville-St-Rémy), n.d.; M. Monier (Bermerain), n.d.; M. Feu Barbare (Marcoing), n.d.; ADN 9R775: German poster, Valenciennes, 8th November 1915; ADN 9R556: Extrait des Procès-verbaux de la Commandanture de Lille, 5th January 1915; ADN 9R797: Commissaire Central de Tourcoing to Prefect, 8th December 1916.

Useful information was usually transmitted back to the Allies via carrier pigeons, which had been parachuted into the occupied area.²¹³ The British Secret Service in particular put a lot of effort and resources into methods of transporting pigeons and agents into occupied France and Belgium.²¹⁴ From March 1917, in certain localities pigeons were dropped on a regular basis, depending on the weather. This was the case in Vieux-Condé, Valenciennes and Douai.²¹⁵

Beyond exchanging information with designated agents, another form of resistance born out of the static fronts of trench warfare was created. From early 1917 in the 'Pigeon Dropping Stunt,' the British sent questionnaires asking the *occupés* to detail information on military units and movements (see Fig. 9). The questionnaires were to be returned by pigeon or, from early 1918, by inflatable balloons dropped with them.²¹⁶ The Germans were aware of these questionnaires, but this did not dissuade everyone, and certain *Nordistes* were punished for espionage involving carrier pigeons.²¹⁷ Many completed the questionnaires: indeed, so confident were the British that they were concerned about adding instructions informing the *occupés* to disguise their handwriting in case of discovery by Germans. Yet they did not wish to dissuade *occupés* from responding.²¹⁸ Their French collaborator responded that:

As far as the Flemish population are concerned the question of disguising the handwriting is not of so much importance, but I know how much the French people are fond of glory, and, unless they are warned, I am afraid some of them will be sticking their names to the bottom of the message just to show how they are trying to help their country.²¹⁹

²¹³ Morgan, *Rue St Roch*, p.178-1.

²¹⁴ See NA WO106/45, especially I(b) 2/252, 'SCHEME for ESTABLISHMENT of PIGEON SERVICES connected with AGENTS in FRANCE,' n.d. et passim.

²¹⁵ History of I(b), p.26 et passim.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.27-8 et passim; Morgan, *Rue St Roch*, p.189-90.

²¹⁷ ADN 9R742: report by mayor of Templeuve containing a copy of a German poster, Templeuve, 12th September 1917, attesting to a man and woman 'condamnés à mort à cause d'espionnage de pigeons-voyageurs'; AN F23/377: M. Cannone (Ors), n.d. Mme Wasselil (Rumegies), n.d.

²¹⁸ NA WO106/45: Major Wallinger to Captain Béliard, 20th September 1917.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Béliard to Wallinger, 22nd September 1917.

These fears were well-founded. A man from Valenciennes completed a questionnaire, which was intercepted by the Germans; he was discovered and killed. In 1928, the town erected a monument in his honour.²²⁰ The only message successfully retrieved from the balloon system was found on a German wire during a British raid – and the sender had ‘been indiscreet enough, in spite of definite instructions to the contrary, to sign her full name and address.’²²¹ At least three people from Nomain were killed in October 1917 after their completed questionnaires were discovered, one of which was ‘imprudemment signé.’²²² These deaths meant that it was not the Germans who ultimately prevented further information from being transmitted, as the British noted:

No measures which the enemy thought fit to adopt in occupied territory were capable of preventing either the despatch of the balloons or the picking up of the pigeons and subsequent despatch of the information by the inhabitants. Many of them unfortunately were shot, but this in no way deterred others, although we were later asked by the French Government to desist for a period from putting this operation into practice.²²³

Nevertheless, the consequences of successfully transmitting information were sometimes spectacular. In Wallers, on 6th August 1918, an airdropped pigeon was found with a letter asking for the *occupés* to provide militarily important information. It was passed among the inhabitants until someone knowing relevant details was found – this person noted that at Louchies there was a depot of numerous munitions trains. A farmer sent the pigeon back, and just four days later Allied planes bombed the depot, destroying it completely. The two men were decorated after the war for their actions.²²⁴ In general, I(b) was surprised by the results of the ‘Pigeon Dropping Stunt.’ It had predicted a 5% return of questionnaires, but on average received 40%, sometimes more. The information ‘in most cases was of a very high order and had the advantage of being fresh

²²⁰ Salome, ‘Valenciennes,’ p.75-6.

²²¹ History of I(b), p.28.

²²² ADN F23/377: proposition en faveur de Mme Lafrance, n.d.; proposition en faveur de M. Caignet, n.d.; proposition en faveur de M. Remy, n.d.

²²³ History of I(b), p.27.

²²⁴ Cattel, *Waller*, p.59.

and rapidly transmitted. For instance, the balloons were usually despatched at about 11 o'clock at night and many of the messages were received at 9 o'clock the next morning.²²⁵ The official British history of carrier pigeons in the war also attests to the success of the scheme and the valuable information provided,²²⁶ as do French *Deuxième Bureau* documents.²²⁷ Many *occupés*, including *Nordistes*, therefore engaged in this resistance: which explains the monuments to the carrier pigeons of the war still standing in Lille and at Le Cateau.²²⁸

The Tip of a Small Iceberg

Many other forms of active resistance took place across the Nord, from relatively rare acts of sabotage,²²⁹ to frequent fabrication of documents (mainly ID cards and *laissez-passer*).²³⁰ Although never more than the actions of a minority within a minority, most forms of active resistance represented a desire to oppose German cultural and military control, to improve the morale of fellow *occupés*, to remain in contact with the outside world, and to participate in the war effort. Even within the morally suspect world of active resistance, many remained convinced that they were doing the right, the respectable thing, and balked at any suggestion otherwise. Active resistance, by never comprising armed resistance, retained an air of respectability for many, but perhaps that was simply self-justification. For those participating in it, it was a duty, an honourable means of joining the war effort and increasing the chances of Allied victory – or at least decreasing the possibility of a German one. The overall effects of active resistance, or of

²²⁵ History of I(b), p.26.

²²⁶ Osman, *Pigeons*, p.46-8.

²²⁷ See SHD 19N547: Note by Tanant, Chef de l'État-Major of 2^e Bureau, Service des Renseignements, 18th August 1917.

²²⁸ Becker, 'D'une guerre,' p.461.

²²⁹ See, for example, ADN 9R746: German poster, Tourcoing, 12th July 1916, and 21st December 1916; ADN 9R753: German poster, Lille, 10th July 1916; Vandenbussche, 'Le pouvoir municipal,' p.462; Cottel, *Walters*, p.57; Maucière, *L'Orage*, p.99.

²³⁰ See, for example, ADN 9R795: Gardien-Chef de la Maison d'Arrêt de Lille to Prefect, 2nd and 3rd June, and 2nd August 1915; ADN 9R765: Commissaire de Police of Wattrelos to Prefect, 27th August 1916; ADN 9R766: Commissaire de Police of Wattrelos to Prefect, 17th September 1917; ADN 9R721: German poster, Roubaix, 13th July 1918; ADN 9R732: German poster, 15th March 1917; ADN 74J241: Dumont papers, 29th October 1916; *BdL*, n°160 (26th May 1916).

any of the forms of resistance studied, are difficult to judge, but resistance in this occupation certainly provided a blueprint for that of 1939-45.²³¹ It also allowed the *occupés* to maintain their identity, and to give them a sense of purpose. As resister *curé* Delattre said, 'Je suis prêtre plus que jamais; je suis Lillois plus que jamais; je suis Français plus que jamais.'²³² Resistance meant that *occupés* felt less helpless, and could be proud of their locality and its apparent defiance. At a time when *mauvaise conduite* was perceived as widespread, resistance provided a counter-example of how to behave, and further fanned the flame of patriotism. The *culture de l'occupé* was centred on patriotism: it criticised those engaging in unbecoming behaviour, especially regarding Germans, and lauded those resisting as best as possible.

²³¹ Annette Becker, 'D'une guerre,' especially p.459 and 265.

²³² Cnudde-Lecointre, 'L'Eglise,' p.117.

Part III – Beyond the Occupation

Before drawing final conclusions, it is necessary to examine the way in which *mauvaise conduite* and resistance were remembered or forgotten after the war, and to contextualise the Nord's occupation experience. This will allow for a deeper understanding of these themes and the occupation experience more generally, demonstrating how they were reshaped and reinterpreted from 1918.

I – Epilogue: Remembering and Forgetting

Mauvaise conduite in Memory

Mauvaise conduite remained in local (and, to some extent, national) consciousness for a short period after the liberation, but this memory was weak and soon became occluded, overshadowed by stronger memories. The memory was centred on the punishment of those having engaged in misconduct, and was visible in the regional press and the punishments themselves.

Pressing Matters

In the last few months of 1918, the regional press maintained a keen interest in the persecution of such individuals. As well as reporting some high-profile cases, such as the fate of the editor of Belgian collaborationist paper *Le Bruxellois*,¹ *Le Progrès du Nord* ran a campaign against war-profiteers, 'mercantils,' 'ravitailleurs,' 'accapareurs,' and those who had had friendly relations with the Germans. The 22nd November 1918 issue contained the aforementioned list of 'simples contestations' on the front page, remarking 'Les aigrefins de l'occupation sont toujours les maîtres du pavé' and 'Quelques-uns des ravitailleurs qui nous ont exploités sont toujours là.'² A few days later, an article criticised *mercantis* who had engaged in 'infâmes complaisances' with the Germans.³ The paper's

¹ See *Progrès* (18th and 20th November 1918).

² *Ibid.*, 22nd November 1918.

³ *Ibid.*, 29th November 1918.

outrage was palpable the following day. In the middle of the front page was the following notice:

ILS SONT REVENUS! Si vous vous promenez dans les rues du Centre ou si vous pénétrez dans les grands cafés, vous y rencontrerez, retour de Bruxelles, la plupart des bandits qui se sont enrichis pendant l'occupation en travaillant avec les Boches. Il faut que ce scandale cesse!⁴

Underneath this proclamation was an article entitled 'L'INSOLENTE CANAILLE,' expanding upon the above statement. It was even suggested that these people were being protected by those in positions of authority. A similar proclamation was published the next day.⁵

Another article described the social inversion and subtleties of occupation life. 'Monsieur X,' a nobody before the war, was now an important person to whom others doffed their hats in the street. He had hoarded goods during the occupation, then re-sold them for the highest price 'avec la complicité de ses amis Boches [sic].' He had frequented the cafés of the Grand' Place, where he 'prononçait de grands discours patriotiques, anéantissait 30.000 ou 40.000 Boches par jour,' but when the Germans left, so did he. Now back in Lille, he walked the streets, 'distribuant d'un air protecteur (car il a maintenant des amis influents) des poignés [sic] de main toutes empreintes de sympathie.'

In December 1918 an article reported a conversation between two *mercantis*, overhead in a café in Lille. The men had left Lille with the Germans because they feared 'justice,' but as soon as they realised that no-one was being punished for their occupation behaviour, they returned.⁶ This notion that suspect persons were not being punished, or were perhaps even being protected, was shared by the wider population, as revealed by the French military's *contrôle postal* of Lille. One *Lillois* wrote of a man he knew was guilty

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30th November 1918.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1st December 1918.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6th December 1918.

of ‘des relations suspectes’ during the occupation: ‘De la façon dont nos Alliés envisagent le délit de “commerce avec l’ennemi”, je m’attends à le voir bientôt bénéficier d’une ordonnance de non-lieu et remettre en liberté.’ He concluded: ‘C’est à vous déguster d’être resté français. Je suis écoeuré et ne demande qu’à m’éloigner de cette malheureuse ville de Lille si éprouvée et tant critiquée.’⁷ However, another former *occupé* stated that most people had engaged in commerce with the Germans.⁸ Perhaps this moral-patriotic grey zone, full of complicity and criticism, was why the memory of *mauvaise conduite* faded rapidly.

Nevertheless, the campaign of *Le Progrès* had some success: on 18th December, it reported on ‘Le traître Hubert,’ a *ravitailleur*, German agent, and correspondent for the *Gazette des Ardennes*, who had brought to the paper’s attention by a reader in response to its article on *mercantis*.⁹ The following day the paper boasted: ‘La campagne que nous avons entreprise ici même contre les drôles du temps d’occupation commence à porter ses fruits.’ One C. Dauphin, allegedly an accomplice of Hubert and fellow contributor to the *Gazette*, had written to the editor. He denied any association with Hubert and claims of denunciation or commerce with the enemy, but did admit that he had written one article for the *Gazette*, which was approved by the mayor of Lambersart. He outlined his logic: ‘Si j’ai eu des relations avec quelques soldats dont la mentalité me paraissait bonne, c’était uniquement pour le bien à faire autour de moi: je ne voyais que le service à rendre, considérant que les faveurs que j’obtenais, avec les mains toujours garnies, ne pouvaient constituer un crime.’¹⁰ A few days later, *Le Progrès* refuted Dauphin’s claims and highlighted the key to notions of *mauvaise conduite*, responding with: ‘Un crime, non, mon pauvre Dauphin, mais tous les honnêtes gens à l’esprit vous

⁷ SHD 16N1462: Commission de contrôle postal de Lille, 1st January 1919, extraits, 1 – ‘opinions sur la libération des pays envahis et sur l’occupation des pays ennemis,’ p.3.

⁸ *Progrès* (16th December 1918), p.2-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18th December 1918.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19th Decmber 1918.

diront [...] que personne de propre n'a le droit d'avoir des relations amicales avec "des soldats ennemis qui leur paraissent bons."¹¹

Cases of those arrested or sentenced for bad occupation behaviour – trafficking in gold, 'affaires de mœurs' involving Germans – were reported in December 1918.¹² Other papers mentioned *mauvaise conduite* in late 1918, but never seemed as outraged as *Le Progrès*.¹³ The memory of *mauvaise conduite* was thus alive and well in the last months of 1918, at least in the pages of the regional press – and presumably in the minds of the former *occupés*.

Articles on this theme are rarer after 1918, but some examples do exist. On 20th October 1919, *Le Progrès* published an piece entitled 'La chasse aux embochés' detailing the arrest of a *Lillois* for intelligence and commerce with the enemy. The sentences of 11 collaborators of the *Gazette* were also reported.¹⁴ In 1921, industrialists of Lille who had complied with the German order to create sandbags faced legal action at the *Parquet*. *La Croix du Nord* of 21st March 1921 printed former acting Prefect Anjubault's version of events.¹⁵ Another paper published an interview with the lawyer of one of the accused arguing for the innocence of the industrialists.¹⁶ This argument won the day, and all of the accused were acquitted, the judge ruling that they had been forced to work by the Germans.¹⁷ Such acquittals, Nivet argues, 'font scandale,' and led the editor of the socialist *La Bataille* to note, 'Seuls les imbéciles ont confiance dans la justice de leur pays.'¹⁸

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22nd December 1918.

¹² *Ibid.*, 21st and 29th December 1918.

¹³ *L'Écho* (25th October, 12th and 21st December 1918); *Dépêche* (21st and 23rd December 1918); *Croix* (13th December 1918).

¹⁴ AML 4H322: *Progrès* (20th October 1919).

¹⁵ *Croix* (21st March 1921).

¹⁶ AML 4H121: clipping, n.a, n.d.

¹⁷ Nivet, *France*, p.356-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.357.

Yet what was the reality of punishments? Were the former *occupés* justified in complaining about apparent clemency?

Limited Punishment

Punishments in the Nord were limited compared to events in politically complex Belgium or Alsace-Lorraine,¹⁹ and especially to the post-World War II *épuration*, when new crimes were created to facilitate punishment.²⁰ As Martinage has demonstrated, the number of those taken to court for and/or found guilty of *intelligence avec l'ennemi* or *commerce avec l'ennemi* was surprisingly low in the Nord – at least according to court records.²¹ Between 1918 and 1925,²² 123 people accused of *intelligence avec l'ennemi* appeared before the various *cours d'assises* of the Nord, of which 83 were tried in the *cour d'assises* of Douai. Of those, 43 were condemned, with punishments ranging from minor correctional sentences up to twenty years' imprisonment in an 'enceinte fortifiée' or deportation.²³ The rest were acquitted.²⁴

This court was not the only avenue through which suspect individuals passed: Nivet notes that *Conseils de guerre* judged such people until October 1919; and in 1920, 'la justice civile du Nord' judged hundreds of such cases, although not all ended in a trial.²⁵ The *parquet* of Valenciennes hosted 24 affairs of *intelligence avec l'ennemi* in July 1923 alone.²⁶ Other sources attest to the punishment of suspect activity, such as the archives of the women's prison in Rennes.²⁷ Yet, overall, the number of punishments for

¹⁹ Rousseaux and van Ypersele, *Patrie*; Laird Boswell, 'From Liberation to Purge Trials in the "Mythic Provinces": Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918–1920,' *French Historical Studies*, 23:1 (winter 2000), pp.129-162.

²⁰ Vinen, *Unfree*, p.342.

²¹ Martinage, 'Les collaborateurs.' For original court documents, see: ADN 3U281/31-78; 2U1/444-8; 2U1/571; ADN 2U2/515; 3U258/564; ADN 3U274/174; ADN 3U303/6-7.

²² Martinage, 'Les collaborateurs,' p.97-8.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.111.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.109-110.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.352.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.441.

mauvaise conduite remained small. This is not to say that the French government did not take accusations of misconduct seriously. Nivet believes that ‘jusqu’à la fin des années trente [...] la fraction, marginale, de la population du Nord ayant collaboré avec l’ennemi ne bénéficie donc d’aucune clémence. Elle reste la face noire de la France héroïque de 1914-1918.’²⁸

The apparent lack of widespread punishment may also be due to the fact that many denunciations leading to investigations were ostensibly ‘inexacts,’ based on rumour or born out of personal quarrels, with many ending in a *non-lieu*.²⁹ Only the high-profile cases were taken to court, and evidently only those who had broken laws could be punished. As the preliminary investigative documents regarding the Nord demonstrate, many more individuals were found, or admitted, to be guilty of breaching the limits of respectability – but judicial punishment for this was not possible. This was noted by central government,³⁰ and criticised by the local population.

The official punishment of ‘collaborators’ could be perceived as a way for both central and local government to remove the dark side of the occupation from the wider collective memory – or at least to be seen to fulfil local demands for retribution, albeit on a small scale. Once a certain number of key individuals had been punished, and the objectives of one form of memory were met, that memory could potentially weaken. This was not a memory that could be celebrated, but perhaps it could be dealt with and disposed of. Thébaud suggests this regarding female misconduct, asking: ‘Que sont devenues ces “mauvaises femmes” après l’arrivée des troupes françaises? Certaines déjà ont été tondues comme le mentionne Grenadou. D’autres jugées; quelques-unes se sont suicidées. Et puis on a oublié...’³¹

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.364.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.350-1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.347.

³¹ Thébaud, *Femme*, p.60.

The rather limited number of punished individuals, on the other hand, may have given the impression that those who had engaged in *mauvaise conduite* were a minority – as opposed to the ostensibly commonplace resistance, and widespread suffering. This appears rather contrary to the large numbers of complaints the former *occupés* made about occupation conduct of numerous compatriots, both during and after the occupation.³² The extent of the official inquiry into these suspects does suggest a belief among French authorities that the ‘Boches du Nord’ moniker³³ could have had some truth to it; yet the end results hint at a desire to minimise the perception of wide-scale misconduct. However, this may have been simply an acknowledgement by the investigators/judges of the realities of the occupation, of the moral-patriotic grey zone in which many lived. Whatever the reasoning, the slow wait for and small number of punishments did not satisfy the local populations, although it paved the way for a narrative of patriotic resistance during the occupation. Although aspects of *mauvaise conduite* are mentioned in some inter-war texts,³⁴ and in recent histories,³⁵ resistance and suffering dominate.

Remembering Resistance

From the liberation onwards, a narrative of widespread, multifarious resistance among the *occupés* was crystallised. On 19th October 1918, the mayor of Tourcoing gave a speech to visiting Prime Minister Clémenceau, outlining the experience of occupation. He detailed the suffering at the hands of the Germans, set against the resistance of the population, particularly concerning the refusal to work for or to hand over metals to the Germans. The passive resistance of the former mayor, at that time imprisoned in

³² See ADHS 4M513, ADHS 517-20, ADHS 342; ADN 9R1193, ADN 1196-7, ADN 1229; US NA Record Group 120: entry 198, Record Group 165; SHD 19N1571, SHD 19N882-3, SHD 19N668-9, SHD 17N393.

³³ Nivet, *Boches*, p.337-9.

³⁴ See, for example, Gromaire, *L’Occupation*; Tierce, *Between*, p.12, 22-3, 37-8, 274; Maucières, *Feuilles*, p.119-20; idem, *L’Orage*, p.207; Mongis, *Quatre ans*, p.9; van der Meersch, *Invasion*, p.14, 18-19, although on p.34-5 he highlights the normality of fraternising with Germans and the abnormality of resistance.

³⁵ See Nivet, *Boches, France* and ‘Femmes’; Becker, *Cicatrices*; McPhail, *Silence*; Le Naour, *Misères*.

Germany, was also highlighted.³⁶ Clémenceau responded by praising the courage, valiance and endurance of the population of French Flanders. He professed admiration for the mayor's actions, and disgust at German crimes, before promising that:

Rien ne sera oublié [...]

Maintenant, soyons tout à la France [...] qui a fait de vous de véritables combattants, alors que vous étiez sous la botte de l'Allemand.

La bataille, vous ne l'avez pas moins bien menée que nos soldats eux-mêmes. Vous avez donné le bon exemple, et quand on fera un jour l'histoire de cette guerre, elle serait incomplète si on ne mentionnait pas avec honneur la résistance des grandes villes du Nord de la France, comme Lille, Roubaix et Tourcoing.³⁷

A few days later, President Poincaré also visited Tourcoing. The mayor welcomed him with an address in which he drew on and reinforced Clémenceau's comments. He evoked the idea that 'les Flamands n'ont jamais supporté la tyrannie' to explain why, 'sous la botte de l'étranger, nous sommes restés calmes et dignes, vaillants et forts, certains du triomphe de notre cause, de la victoire définitive.'³⁸ The official line on the occupation experience was taking shape. Poincaré merely cemented the narrative by professing:

Vous, vous avez vécu pendant plus de quatre ans sous la domination étrangère, vous ne vous êtes pas laissé [sic] émouvoir, vous ne vous êtes pas laissé [sic] ébranler, et, pas une heure, vous n'avez désespéré de la France.

(Bravos)

C'est à vous que doit aller toute la reconnaissance nationale, à vous, en même temps qu'à ces admirables armées françaises et alliées [...]³⁹

³⁶ AMT 4HA26: 'Tourcoing libéré 17 octobre 1918, Proclamation de l'administration municipale, visites du Général commandant des troupes britanniques, de M. le Président du Conseil des Ministres, de M. le Président de la République,' 'Discours prononcé par M. Vandevenne, Maire de Tourcoing, à l'adresse de M. Clémenceau, Président du Conseil des Ministres,' 19th October 1918.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 'Réponse de Monsieur le Président du Conseil des Ministres à Monsieur le Maire,' 19th October 1918.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 'Discours prononcé par M. Vandevenne, Maire de Tourcoing, à l'adresse de Monsieur le Président de la République, lors de son passage en notre ville, le 21 Octobre 1918.'

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 'Allocution prononcée dans l'hôtel de ville de Tourcoing, le 21 Octobre 1918, par Monsieur le Président de la République, en réponse au discours de bienvenue de Monsieur Vandevenne, faisant fonctions de Maire de Tourcoing,' 21st October 1918.

Both Clémenceau and the President therefore acknowledged the sufferings of occupation and agreed with the narrative espoused by the former *occupés*, one of sacrifice for France. They also rubber-stamped the idea of widespread resistance and dignified conduct on the part of the *occupés*. The new Prefect further reflected this view in his first proclamation to the population, stating that he knew ‘les souffrances inouïes qu’elles [les populations] ont supportées; le courage et l’abnégation admirables qu’elles ont montrés leur ont acquis pour jamais des titres à la reconnaissance du pays tout entier.’⁴⁰

This gratitude was primarily expressed through medals awarded to certain categories of former *occupés*. Those having engaged in acts of heroism and bravery were awarded the *Légion d’Honneur*, sometimes posthumously: this was the case for at least 28 *Nordistes*.⁴¹ Others were awarded the *Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française*, created in 1917.⁴² Potential recipients could and did nominate themselves; others were nominated by their mayors, although successful applications had to be accompanied by supporting documentation in both cases.⁴³ There was a small window in which former *occupés* could apply, from April 1922 to December 1923. By the end of 1923, 4,257 such applications had been received, although only 2,885 examined.⁴⁴ Applicants also included those believed to have gone through an extraordinary experience, often providing a civic or patriotic service during the occupation. Thus the director of the *Galleries Lilloises* was nominated for his role in extinguishing the fire in the *hôtel de ville* in 1916, and helping inhabitants evacuate their property.⁴⁵ One man from Saint-Amand-les-Eaux requested the medal because he had injured himself falling off a wagon during

⁴⁰ ADN 9R1187: proclamation of Prefect, Lille, 23rd October 1918.

⁴¹ See the entirety of AN F23/377. Two other *Nordistes*, M. Dubar and M. Willot, key collaborators of *La Patience*, received the *Légion* whilst alive. Other recipients do not appear in these documents, thus it must be assumed that these 30 individuals represent only a fraction actual recipients. For examples of propositions, see ADN 4Z34.

⁴² Nivet, *France*, p.335.

⁴³ ADN 3Z140.

⁴⁴ AN BB32/300, newspaper clipping, no title, n.d.: ‘En conséquence, par décret du 8 octobre 1923 (J.O. du 12) le délai fixé par le décret du 1^{er} avril 1922 est prolongé au 31 décembre prochain.’

⁴⁵ AN BB32/4: Ministre du Travail to M. le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice, 25th April 1921 – and supporting documentation.

German requisitions – his request was denied.⁴⁶ A successful candidate was Mme Allard from Valenciennes, who had worked for the Red Cross during the occupation, tending to evacuees and prisoners of war.⁴⁷ At least 87 *Nordistes* applied for and received the *Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française*.⁴⁸

Other symbols of gratitude and compensation were available, most hinting at dignified behavior and some fulfillment of duty or resistance. On 30th June 1921, the *Médaille des victimes de l'invasion* was created at the request of the *Ministre des régions libérées*. It was awarded initially to hostages, deportees, those imprisoned by the enemy, or who had been subjected to forced labour, but from April 1922 it could also be given to those who had experienced serious brutality or ill-treatment. Depending on the judgment of the investigating committee, recipients were awarded a bronze, silver or vermeil medal.⁴⁹ The medal came with a certificate highlighting that the recipient had been awarded the medal ‘en vue de perpétuer dans sa famille et au milieu de ses concitoyens, le souvenir de ses vertus civiques dans les régions envahies, au cours de l’occupation ennemie.’ (See Fig. 10). Even this medal from the national government, then, seemed to be geared towards local remembrance.

On 14th March 1936, a law came into force creating the *Médaille des prisonniers civils, déportés et otages de la Grande Guerre*.⁵⁰ It could not be awarded to those already in possession of the *Médaille des victimes de l'invasion*. Its goal was ‘commémorer le souvenir de leurs sacrifices et honorer leurs actes de dévouement à la Patrie, en reconnaissance des épreuves qu’ils ont dû subir pour elle au cours de la guerre 1914-1918.’ In total, more than 10,400 of these medals were awarded to inhabitants of the

⁴⁶ AN BB32/3: Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française concerning M. Auguste Alloy, 12th March 1923.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Mme Allard.

⁴⁸ See ADN 6Z39; ADN 4Z34: République Française, Sous-Préfecture de Douai, Médailles des Victimes de l’Invasion 1914-1918 et de la Reconnaissance Française; ‘Active Resistance’ chapter.

⁴⁹ Nivet, *France*, p.335.

⁵⁰ Becker, *Oubliés*, p.374.

entire occupied zone,⁵¹ including to at least 107 *Nordistes*.⁵² Many *Nordistes* applied for and received the other medals.⁵³ Foreign decorations were further conferred on former *occupés*, usually those having engaged in resistance to the benefit of Allied powers, which was the case for numerous *Nordistes*.⁵⁴ Among the recipients of such medals include celebrated resisters such as de Bettignies, Trulin, members of the *Comité Jacquet*, *La Patience*, and their accomplices.⁵⁵

Medals, particularly the *Légion d'Honneur* or the *Croix de Guerre*, were also awarded to entire communes, towns and villages. The narrative of suffering, sacrifice, and resistance was thus yet again reinforced. Among others,⁵⁶ Valenciennes was awarded the *Croix de Guerre*,⁵⁷ as was Crèvecœur-sur-l'Éscaut which, 'Détruite par les bombardements, a fait preuve de la plus belle attitude sous les obus et au cours des souffrances de l'occupation.'⁵⁸ Cambrai and Douai received the *Légion d'Honneur* in September 1919.⁵⁹ The latter was described as a 'ville douloureusement meurtrie par quatre années d'une dure occupation,' which had 'puisé la force de résister à toutes les souffrances et de préparer même, autant qu'il était en son pouvoir, sa renaissance à sa pleine vie française.'⁶⁰ Beyond these citations, at least 140 localities in the Nord (most of which had been occupied) received the *L'orde de l'Armée* in the early 1920s. Such distinctions

⁵¹ Nivet, *France*, p.336.

⁵² ADN 4Z34: République Française, Sous-Préfecture de Douai, Médailles des Victimes de l'Invasion 1914-1918 et de la Reconnaissance Française.

⁵³ See, for example, the entirety of AN BB32/1-4, 300-301; AN F23/14, AN F23/373-78. The gaps may also contain relevant information, especially for AN BB32/5-299. Unfortunately, a comprehensive study of these files was not possible within the timeframe. See also: 'Active Resistance' chapter and Nivet, *France*, p.332-4.

⁵⁴ Nivet, *France*, p.336-7.

⁵⁵ NA WO/372/23 (image 1664); NA WO106/6192.

⁵⁶ For example, Courchelettes – see and 4Z207: *Journal Officiel* [henceforth *JO*] (19th June 1930).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.334.

⁵⁸ ADN 15J85: Commune de Crèvecœur-sur-l'Escaut, response to the Commission Historique du Nord questionnaire, 27th September 1921.

⁵⁹ Nivet, *France*, p.334. Nivet puts the date as 14th September, but a document in ADN M127/124 states that the date was in fact 13th September 1919, in Paris.

⁶⁰ Jean-Claude and Brigitte Lefranc-Florin, *Douai sous l'occupation 1914-1918* (Brussels, 1974), cited in Nivet, *France*, p.334.

were awarded for their alleged dignified and patriotic suffering during the occupation.⁶¹ Stock phrases and themes appeared, such as ‘digne et courageuse/la plus belle attitude’⁶² or ‘la foi en la victoire.’⁶³

Whether to towns or individuals, symbols of gratitude and commemoration were awarded for experiences of extreme suffering *and* of extraordinary heroism or patriotism. Indeed, a link was drawn between the two, fitting into the *culture de l’occupé* according to which suffering the occupation was itself heroic and patriotic. The extreme suffering of combatants, however, was the apogee of this rather paradoxical worldview – and no matter how much the *occupés* had suffered or resisted, their experience would never be able to trump the more universal trench experience in national memory. For a variety of socio-cultural and political reasons, France would and could never be as grateful to her formerly occupied populations as she was towards her former combatants.

On the local scale, the occupation cast a long shadow, and the official narrative appeared again and again in the inter-war years, in varied forms. Occupation behavior was not the only subject of interest – in the immediate post-war period, the local press reported on and called for reparations, for instance.⁶⁴ Indeed, the Treaty of Versailles eventually called for Germany to pay for loss of property and life in the occupied regions,⁶⁵ although Keynes saw the amount demanded as excessive.⁶⁶ The developments concerning reparations highlighted suffering and appealed to a sense of justice, but the resistance

⁶¹ See ADN M127/124.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Aubigny-au-Bac, *JO* (12th February 1921); Beaucamps, *JO* (18th September 1920); Bois-Grenier, *JO* (18th September 1920); et passim.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Avesnes-le-Sec, *JO* (16th June 1922); La Bassée, *JO* (13th August 1920); Boussois, *JO* (22nd December 1920); et passim.

⁶⁴ See, for example, *L’Écho* (20th, 22nd, 24th December 1918); *Dépêche* (22nd and 23rd December 1918); and *Croix* (18th November 1918).

⁶⁵ Peace Treaty of Versailles, 28th June 1919, part viii (Reparations), Annexe i, article 3. Accessed online on 1st February 2012 at <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partviii.asp>

⁶⁶ John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York, 1920), p.125-30.

narrative allowed for pride, thus was the subject of many more articles for years after the Armistice.

Resistance in the Press

Local papers published many articles on resisters and resistance in the inter-war period, whether simply recounting certain acts, or informing people of the fate of those punished by the Germans. Many such articles appearing in late 1918 crystallised the position of key resisters. *La Croix du Nord* reported on the actions of the *doyen* of St-Christophe in Lille,⁶⁷ and the service in November 1918 in memory of Léon Trulin⁶⁸ – both perfect examples of Catholic resistance (two members of the *Comité Jacquet*, including Jacquet himself, had been atheists and rejected a religious burial,⁶⁹ which may explain their absence in the pages of *La Croix*). Catholic martyrdom was therefore linked to resistance, unlike in World War II, when the Church was associated with Vichy,⁷⁰ and resistance with uncatholic suicide and taking control of one's destiny rather than expiatory suffering.⁷¹ Indeed, the martyrdom of 1940-44 eventually revolved mainly around *Jewish* martyrdom.

From 1918, *Le Progrès du Nord* detailed all types of resistance, from that of municipal councillors and mayors, to those who hid Allied servicemen from the Germans, as well as Jacquet and Trulin.⁷² It also published calls for stories of courage during the occupation to be sent in, from which the paper wished to create a *Livre d'Or*.⁷³ It asked that those who engaged in acts of resistance make themselves known out of an explicit duty to memory: 'Car il est des gestes qui ne peuvent pas demeurer méconnus, et des noms que

⁶⁷ *Croix* (1st November 1918).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 27th November 1918.

⁶⁹ ADN 9R656 (Musée 352): Jacquet to his wife, 21st September 1915.

⁷⁰ Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.268-71; Gildea, *Marianne*, pp.206-10. There were Catholic resisters, however: Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.418-19; Gildea, *Marianne*, pp.211-22.

⁷¹ For the values of the Resistance, see Kedward, 'La résistance.'

⁷² *Progrès* (4th, 9th, 10th November; 2nd, 5th, 9th, 13th, 17th, 22nd December 1918).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13th December 1918.

l'avenir doit retenir.⁷⁴ Similarly, *L'Écho du Nord* launched a 'concours de récits et chansons sur l'occupation et la guerre' in December 1918. Although not just reserved for acts of resistance, these were the preferred subject: 'Notre région a été occupée pendant plus de quatre années et nul historien ne pourra dire tout ce que nos populations ont enduré et tout ce qu'il leur a fallu de courage pour résister aux quotidiennes persécutions des Boches.' It was seen as in the public interest to provide testimony of the horrors of this painful period. Entries had to be a maximum of 200 lines and based on reality, with 'les actes d'héroïsme collectif et individuel' the first suggested theme.⁷⁵

Throughout the interwar period, dozens of articles reported on the smallest developments regarding celebrated (mainly active) resisters. Thus the posthumous awarding of the *Légion d'Honneur* to Trulin on 2nd June 1935 appeared in the publication of local historical society *Les Amis de Lille*.⁷⁶ *Les Amis* used Trulin's resistance as a way to both crystallise the positives of the occupation in public memory, and as a means to advocate peace. It was remarked:

Quel est le sens en effet de cette cérémonie si ce n'est de dire avec Léon Trulin notre horreur des carnages sanglants et notre volonté d'être des Hommes de Paix [...]
notre Nord a été pendant la guerre sans Peur et sans Reproche; [sic] sa population, qui durant la Paix, paye le tribut de l'argent, a payé pendant la guerre, outre le sacrifice des combattants, le tribut du sang et de la souffrance sans espoir.⁷⁷

Thus the sacrifices of the Nord became one with the sacrifices of combatants, and *Nordistes* rejoined the nation further by sharing the popular pacifist sentiment.

The inauguration of the monument in Trulin's honour – a wall of the *Citadelle* bearing his name – was reported in November 1935.⁷⁸ The authors blended hagiography with

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 22nd December 1918.

⁷⁵ *L'Écho* (27th December 1918).

⁷⁶ AML 4H75: *Les Amis de Lille* (15th June, 1st, 15th and 20th July 1935).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ AML 4H75: *Réveil* and *Dépêche* (9th November 1935).

patriotism and religious virtue: one described the ceremony as ‘Le pèlerinage de la citadelle.’⁷⁹ Most stories on Trulin, like articles on other resisters, offered a summary of his deeds, and demonstrated that the authors held him in high esteem. *Les Amis de Lille* noted that ‘Avant d’être enfant, il a choisi d’être homme.’ Here, as became the norm, Trulin was portrayed as a child, although he was 18 at the time of his execution. Evidently, his youth made his deeds seem more heroic, and his death more tragic. And what a death – *Les Amis* noted that Trulin showed no sign of fear faced with the German firing squad, refusing the blindfold, and proclaiming, ‘Mon Dieu, je vous demande pardon. Vive la France! Vive la Belgique!’ In his last letter to his mother, he displayed Christ-like sentiments: ‘Vivez en Paix et sans haine: Je fais grâce parce que l’on ne me la fait pas... Je pardonne à tout le monde amis et ennemis...’⁸⁰ Just like Christ, ‘rendu à la vie par notre amour, de toute sa gloire, Léon Trulin est encore vivant.’⁸¹

Throughout the inter-war period, similar articles were published about the *Comité Jacquet*,⁸² and numerous less well-known resisters,⁸³ although surprisingly few articles deal with de Bettignies.⁸⁴ All were alike in style, based on the awarding of medals, the creation of monuments, and sometimes the retelling of heroics – and always full of praise for the subjects’ alleged love of France and sense of duty. The actions of these heroes were cast within a redemptive, heroic framework. For example, in September 1932, *Le*

⁷⁹ *Dépêche* (9th November 1935).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, single photocopied document entitled *Les Amis de Lille* (15th June, 1st, 15th and 20th July 1935).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² AML 4H76: *Les Amis* (1st February and 1st September 1930); *L’Écho* (25th March, 19th May 1919; 28th February 1920); *Réveil* (20th May 1923, 18th June 1939); *Croix* (18th June 1939).

⁸³ See most of AML 4H78, especially: *Réveil* (9th November 1928; 24th September 1932; 9th March 1933; 13th August 1935; 16th January, 18th June, 14th August, 4th September, 23rd September 1936); *Dépêche* (12th December 1928, 23rd December 1933, 13th August 1935); *L’Écho* (27th March 1919; 20th February 1927; 11th-12th November 1928; 26th December 1933; 13th August 1935; 11th August, 4th October 1936); *Croix* (13th August 1935, 23rd August and 18th September 1936); *La Voix des prisonniers civils de la Grande Guerre* (September 1936); ADN 16J99: *L’Écho* (20th February 1924); *Le Grand Hebdomadaire Illustré de la Région du Nord de la France* (27th February 1921); *Le Réveil Illustré* (24th February; 2nd, 9th March 1924); *Le Télégramme du Nord*, *Croix*, *Dépêche*, *Le Grand Écho du Nord*, and *Réveil* (17th February 1924); AML 4H74: *Réveil* (4th-6th December 1931).

⁸⁴ AML 4H77: *L’Écho* (8th January 1920 and 3rd and 10th November 1927); *Progrès* (25th August 1934); *Le Grand Hebdomadaire Illustré* (7th March 1920). For a theory explaining why the story of de Bettignies was not effectively perpetuated, see Darrow, *French Women*, p.281-3.

Réveil du Nord informed its readers that ‘Mme Jeanne Leclercq-Bourgeois fut une noble et courageuse héroïne qu’on n’oubliera pas demain au cours de la cérémonie du souvenir.’ At this ceremony the president of the organisation in memory of the *Comité Jacquet* described Leclercq-Bourgeois as ‘une des plus nobles et courageuses femmes qui a sauvé, par son héroïsme magnifique, l’honneur de toutes les femmes du Nord envahi.’⁸⁵

However, often the retelling of heroics represented not the effective continuation of a certain memory, but the rediscovery of such events. Just as Darrow has argued for the case of de Bettignies, whenever there was publicity, the press discovered resisters anew, each time extolling how much they had done for France, and how much they had been forgotten. Often journalists misspelled the names of key resisters.⁸⁶ In some cases, the press was aware of the lack of a resilient memory and its role in keeping the flames burning: after publishing extracts from resister (and friend of de Bettignies) Louise Thuliez’s memoirs in December 1933, *La Dépêche* concluded in stating: ‘Mlle Thuliez n’a-t-elle pas raison de s’étonner que, sauf le monument élevé à Louise de Bettignies, il n’existe rien en France pour rappeler le sacrifice des martyres de la patrie. [sic]’⁸⁷ The act of publishing her memoirs may be perceived as a salvo in the struggle against oblivion.

A year before the publication of Thuliez’s memoirs, the president of the committee for the memory of Trulin published *L’adolescent chargé de gloire*, although this was not the first work on Trulin. In its opening lines in the review of this publication, *La Croix du Nord* expressed its hope: ‘Un jour, quand nos petits enfants, devenus des grands parents [sic], conteront de belles histoires vraies à leurs petits fils [sic ...] ils s’inspireront du livre qui vient de [sic] consacrer à Léon Trulin.’⁸⁸ This was more a command than a desire – the same sentiment was expressed on the front page of *Les Amis de Lille* two months earlier, with the heading, “‘L’Adolescent chargé de gloire” est paru: chaque famille lilloise

⁸⁵ AML 4H78: *Réveil* (4th September 1932).

⁸⁶ Darrow, *French Women*, p.282.

⁸⁷ AML 4H78: *Dépêche* (23rd December 1933).

⁸⁸ AML 4H75: *Croix* (8th December 1932).

doit posséder ce livre.⁸⁹ This heading dominated from October to December 1932,⁹⁰ although the motives behind such publicity may not have been wholly patriotic considering that the *Amis de Lille* had edited this book.⁹¹

Victimhood and resistance were the backbone of the official commemorative framework. However, this framework also seemed to press for a removal of the particularities of the occupation experience, calling for a speedy reunion with France and thus France's wartime narrative. By linking the fate of the *occupés* with that of the soldiers, the occupation experience was not only being glorified, avoiding to a large extent any shame or dishonour associated with either the initial Allied retreat of September 1914 or the *mauvaise conduite* of *occupés*; it was being absorbed into the national experience, thus removed of its specificity. This was the beginning of the end for the occupation narrative on a national level.

Ceremonies and Monuments

Numerous ceremonies dedicated to occupation events and personalities took place in the inter-war period. So too did the construction of monuments, although monuments directly relating to the occupation are rare in the Nord.⁹² Among these, active resisters and their deaths were the most frequently commemorated people and events. Lille still has its monuments to the *Comité Jacquet*, Trulin and de Bettignies.⁹³ Unlike monuments to suffering experienced on a collective scale during the occupation,⁹⁴ resistance was usually remembered symbolically through *individual* monuments, or in a more individualistic manner.⁹⁵ Roads and town squares were named after resisters,⁹⁶ and

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, *Les Amis* (15th October 1932).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15th October, 1st November, and 15th December 1932.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1st-15th September 1932.

⁹² Becker, *Oubliés*, p.365-6. See also idem, 'Mémoire,' and *Cicatrices*.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.342; idem, 'D'une guerre,' p.456.

⁹⁴ Becker, 'Mémoire,' p.344.

⁹⁵ Becker, 'D'une guerre,' p.456.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.342; Nivet, *France*, p.329 and 331. For instance, the *Place Louise de Bettignies* in Lille.

personal tombs in cemeteries commemorated them⁹⁷ – such as that in Lille’s eastern cemetery concerning *Patience* collaborators Willot and Pinte.⁹⁸ Further, the lease on the tombs of the *Comité Jacquet* members was renewed at no charge for 30 years in February 1920,⁹⁹ then awarded permanently in December 1933.¹⁰⁰

Often ceremonies and monuments were the result of campaigning on behalf of organisations created to perpetuate a certain memory and to influence local policy in this regard. Representative in this respect were forms of commemoration surrounding Trulin – around whom it was later said a ‘culte du souvenir’ was built¹⁰¹ – and the *Comité Jacquet*. The creation and celebration of a monument to Trulin on the wall of the *Citadelle* in 1935 has already been mentioned, as has the ceremony surrounding his family being awarded the *Légion d’Honneur* on his behalf. These were stages in a piecemeal but organised commemoration process, which saw Trulin’s resistance forever tied to that of the *Comité Jacquet*, and these five ‘fusillés Lillois’ in turn representing the respectable occupation experience. In fact, Trulin had already been linked with the other *fusillés* during the war, as their families had been paid a monthly allowance by the municipality.¹⁰² The *Caisse des Victimes du Devoir* also offered financial recompense to the family of some *Comité* members, as well as other resisters.¹⁰³ Trulin and the *Comité Jacquet* were thought of as equally worthy of remembrance, in this case comprising a financial duty to their families.

⁹⁷ Becker, ‘Mémoire,’ p.342.

⁹⁸ Becker, ‘D’une guerre,’ p.457.

⁹⁹ AML 4H76: Séance of Lille’s Conseil Municipal, 9th February 1920.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, séance of 9th December 1933.

¹⁰¹ AML 4H75: *Nord Matin* (5th March 1978).

¹⁰² AML 4H76: ‘Rapport du Directeur, Ville de Lille, Services Financiers,’ 18th November 1918. The family of Maertens received 215F, of Verhulst 100F, and of Trulin 60F; Prefect to mayor, 30th January 1919.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Secrétaire général du Conseil d’administration de la Caisse des Victimes du Devoir, to mayor, 14th October, 8th November, and 20th December 1919.

Trulin was awarded numerous decorations and citations posthumously in 1919 and 1920,¹⁰⁴ and on 30th September and 1st October 1922 fêtes run by the *Comité du Commerce et des Fêtes du Vieux-Lille* were held in his honour.¹⁰⁵ The accompanying booklet summarised Trulin's heroics, as well as those of his young friends, and his death. It contained a song dedicated to him, describing him as an immortal 'enfant héroïque [...] un soldat tombé' for Belgium, for 'le Droit' and 'la Liberté'.¹⁰⁶ These are the values for which Trulin is said to have died, linked to the notion of respectability.

In May 1923, a poster called for as many *Lillois* as possible to aid in the posing of a commemorative plaque on the 'Murs des cinq Fusillés Lillois' (Trulin being one of the five).¹⁰⁷ The ceremony attracted much attention.¹⁰⁸ This plaque was not enough for those safeguarding the memory of these men, and eventually a full-blown monument entitled 'Lille à ses fusillés' was unveiled in March 1929 (see Fig. 11). It cost 200,000 francs, raised by contributions from the population at large with a subsidy from the municipality.¹⁰⁹ Just one year before, however, some were unhappy about an alleged lack of commemoration regarding Trulin. In November 1928, *Les Amis de Lille* wrote of Trulin, one of the 'plus glorieuses' victims of the war: 'Ce petit héros a-t-il été connu, compris, apprécié à sa mesure, glorifié comme il le mérite?'¹¹⁰ This was despite the fact that the *monument aux fusillés* had been planned since 1924,¹¹¹ although even when it was unveiled it was controversial, not pleasing everyone.¹¹² This was particularly the case

¹⁰⁴ AML 4H75: list, n.d., n.a., entitled 'Madame Trulin à Lille (Nord).' Trulin received l'Ordre de l'Armée, English Medal of War 1914-1918, a citation to the order of the British Army; in January 1920, his family was presented with an OBE and other medals. See also *La Voix du Nord* (1st April 1971)

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 'Comité du Commerce et des Fêtes du Vieux-Lille – Programme des 30 Septembre et 1^{er} Octobre 1922 (Lille, 1922).'

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, text of 'Pour le droit, pour la liberté.'

¹⁰⁷ AML 4H75: Poster, 'Comité Jacquet: Pose d'un plaque commémorative,' Lille, 21st May 1923.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, AML 4H76: *Réveil* (20th May 1923). For more information, see ADN 70J213.

¹⁰⁹ Becker, 'Mémoire,' p.348.

¹¹⁰ AML 4H75: *Les Amis de Lille* (1st November 1928).

¹¹¹ Becker, 'Mémoire,' p.346. Interestingly, Deconninck had predicted that such a monument might be erected, and in his last letter to his wife asked that his name appear next to that of Jacquet – AML 4H76: Deconninck to his wife, 15th September 1915.

¹¹² Becker, 'Mémoire,' p.348.

regarding Trulin, who appeared on the monument blindfolded despite his real-life rejection of a blindfold; the sculptor soon corrected the error.¹¹³ Further, his family protested against the position of Trulin on the monument – his likeness lying dead on the floor, next to the upright members of the *Comité Jacquet*. They believed that ‘il a été traité en accessoire et que sa conduite méritait tout le contraire.’¹¹⁴ Consequently, a further memorial to Trulin was planned, paid for by public donations,¹¹⁵ and this statue of Trulin by himself was placed on the *Avenue du Peuple Belge* in 1934.¹¹⁶ (It can now be found outside Lille’s theatre).

Yet Trulin’s memory still remained linked inextricably to that of the *Comité Jacquet*. When the anniversary of the execution of the *Comité* members took place on 20th September 1931, Trulin’s name was also mentioned in a poster entitled ‘N’oublions pas!!!’ created by ‘Le Comité des CINQ FUSILLÉS LILLOIS.’¹¹⁷ In fact, this committee for the memory of Trulin, Jacquet, Maertens, Verhulst and Deconninck had initially (and rather confusingly) been called the *Comité Jacquet*. It was created in April 1920 and its goal was ‘perpétuer la mémoire d’Eugène Jacquet, de ses compagnons et, en général, des héros lillois fusillés pendant l’occupation: 1^o en leur élevant un monument funéraire;- 2^o en venant à l’aide de leur famille.’¹¹⁸ In fact, the mayor of Lille had already expressed, in October 1919, his desire to create a monument to the memories of these five men.¹¹⁹

Alongside this group was the ‘Comité Georges Maertens,’ created sometime before September 1919, charged with receiving subscriptions to pay for a ‘séulture digne de lui’

¹¹³ AML 4H76: *Les Amis de Lille* (1st February 1930).

¹¹⁴ AML 4H75: *Les Amis de Lille* (n.d.).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, poster, n.d., ‘Faites votre devoir – Envoyez votre souscription pour le Monument à Léon Trulin [...]’

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, L’Adjoint Délugé du Maire de Lille, to M. Guy Harnould, 20th December 1962.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, poster, Lille, Comité Jacquet et des Cinq Fusillés Lillois, 20th September 1931. Original emphasis.

¹¹⁸ AML 4H76: Comité Jacquet to mayor, 2nd April 1920.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Rapport de M. le Maire (Extrait du Registre aux délibérations du Conseil Municipal de la Ville de Lille, séance du 18 Octobre 1919).

in Lille's eastern cemetery, and to provide financial aid to his widow.¹²⁰ By September 1919, enough money had been raised for the monument on his tomb to be built and the excess money given to his widow. Maerten was the only genuine *Lillois* of the *Comité Jacquet*, a fact emphasised in the *Comité Maertens's* booklet regarding the monument¹²¹ – perhaps this is why he appears to be the only *fusillé* to whom a separate organisation was dedicated. A model of the monument itself (Fig. 12) was unveiled in February 1920,¹²² and the final product in a ceremony on 26th September 1920, involving key notables, veterans, as well as British, Belgian and French military detachments.¹²³ The *Comité Maertens* thus fulfilled its objectives rapidly.

The exact activities of the inter-war *Comité Jacquet* are unclear, beyond the yearly procession on 20th September.¹²⁴ However, by 1937 the *Ministre de l'Intérieur* judged the *Comité's* activity to be 'insuffisante depuis plusieurs semestres.' As such, 'Il apparaît que ce groupement a rempli heureusement son but statutaire et qu'il ne saurait justifier son maintien comme Œuvre de Guerre dans les conditions de la Loi du 30 Mai 1916.' Its dissolution was ordered.¹²⁵ Yet in 1939 the *Comité* returned with renewed vigour and purpose, as war approached. On 1st June, the *Comité* wrote to the mayor of Lille, arguing:

Pour coopérer effectivement à L'UNION [...] qui, en présence des menaces extérieures, s'avère essentiellement au salut du Pays et de la Liberté, nous devons ranimer toutes les œuvres et toutes les activités qui tendent à rapprocher les hommes divisés [...]

[...] L'exemple glorieux de ces hommes [...] ordonne irrésistiblement, à tous ceux qui cultivent pieusement leur souvenir, de se rapprocher, d'apprendre à se connaître, à s'estimer et à s'aimer.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, President of *Comité Georges Maertens* to Prefect, 24th December 1919.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 'Inauguration du Monument élevé à la Mémoire du héros G. MAERTENS,' n.d., n.a.

¹²² *Ibid.*, *L'Écho* (28th February 1920).

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, *Réveil* (18th June 1939).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 'Le Chef de Division délégué' for the Prefect, to mayor, 6th October 1937.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, President of *Comité Jacquet* to mayor, 1st June 1939. Original emphasis.

The Comité was to be enlarged, made stronger than ever, and its personnel (many of whom had died) replaced.¹²⁷ The president then called for the *Comité d'Honneur* to be reconstituted – which did occur¹²⁸ – and for a *Journée des Fusillés* to be celebrated regularly, although the onset of war appears to have prevented this idea from coming to fruition. A link was thus drawn between the resistance of 1914-18 and the response to the upcoming war of 1939-45.¹²⁹

Beyond the *fusillés* and Trulin, other resisters were the subject of real or attempted commemoration via ceremonies and monuments.¹³⁰ De Bettignies was also promoted within pantheon of heroes.¹³¹ However, monuments and ceremonies perversely provided concrete and short-term outlets for memory and commemoration. They were receptacles into which memories could be poured and stored, sites of memory which provided a way of both remembering the occupation on certain occasions (anniversaries of deaths, for example), but forgetting the occupation experience on a daily basis. The monuments were allegedly proof that the occupation was not forgotten, but once these memorials were built, the population could move on. The goals of the organisations dedicated to the memory of resisters could be fulfilled – and once fulfilled, their purpose was undermined, and the memory of those whom they wanted to remember weakened. *La Dépêche* in November 1932 – a year after the well-attended ceremony for the sixteenth anniversary of Trulin's death¹³² – noticed this paradox:

Ah! si les Allemands avaient eu un Trulin! Que de poèmes, de pièces de théâtre, de films! Nous, nous avons eu, rien qu'à Lille, Trulin, Derain,

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, *Réveil* (18th June 1939).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*; *Dépêche* and *Croix* (18th June 1939).

¹²⁹ See Becker, 'D'une guerre.'

¹³⁰ See, for example, AML 4H76: Edouard & Fernard Plouvier de Lille, Chévaliers de la Légion d'Honneur, Souvenir de la Fête du 5 Mai 1921; AML 4H74: 'Comité Jacquet et des Fusillés du Nord Envahi, Projet d'érection d'un monument en l'honneur du douanier Guénard, Demande de participation de la Ville, Rapport à l'Administration Municipale,' 13th October 1933; AML 4H78: *Réveil* (24th September 1932).

¹³¹ For example, a mass was held on 22nd September 1919 by the bishop of Lille in honour of the *fusillés* and de Bettignies – AML 4H76: note of the mayor of Lille, 19th September 1919.

¹³² See ADN 70J349 *passim*.

Jacquet, Deconinck, Maertens, Verhulst, bien d'autres. Estimez-vous que, malgré tous les monuments, nous mettions leur nom assez haut?¹³³

Redier wrote in 1937 that, 'Dans cent ans, dans deux cents ans, la page douloureuse et hautaine qu'ont ajoutée les envahis à nos annales sera sans doute inscrite dans les mémoires et dans les cœurs. Aujourd'hui il faut bien dire que ce n'est pas fait.'¹³⁴ For Redier, there was a duty to remember the *occupés* and their resistance: 'Quant aux envahis, honte à celui qui ne les honorerait point à l'égal des plus douloureux soldats de nos armées! Honte à qui les nommerait sans un religieux respect!'¹³⁵ Yet this was not the case, and even all the commemorations surrounding Trulin had not been able to realise Redier's dream. It seemed that the more events and people were commemorated, the more they were forgotten by the wider public – although Redier may not have been referring exclusively to the local populations of the occupied regions.

A Waning Pre-Occupation: Remembrance After 1945

Perhaps because of the Gaullist emphasis on resistance in the Second World War, perhaps also because of prevailing resistance memory before 1939, many post-1945 articles in the regional press dealing with the occupation of 1914-18 focused on the various anniversaries related to the resisters of 1914-18, or on their deaths.¹³⁶ Yet each time a resistance story appeared, it was presented as if for the first time, suggesting that these one-time local heroes had indeed been forgotten. Again, the memory of Trulin proves exemplary. By 1959, a Parisian stamp-collecting society wrote to the *mairie* of Lille to obtain details 'concernant la date et lieu de naissance, faits de résistance, date et lieu du décès' of Trulin, in whose honour a stamp had been issued in 1939.¹³⁷ Similarly, in 1962, the adjunct to the mayor of Lille wrote a response to an amateur historian

¹³³ AML 4H75: *Dépêche* (4th November 1932).

¹³⁴ Redier, *Allemands*, p.163.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.164.

¹³⁶ See AML 4H75-8.

¹³⁷ AML 4H75: 'Tout pour la philatélie' to the État Civil, Mairie de Lille, 26th November 1959.

inquiring about the monuments to Trulin existing in Lille.¹³⁸ Even the memory of high-profile resisters had been fading.

This was not for want of trying. In 1946, another ‘manifestation du souvenir’ was held on the anniversary of Trulin’s execution, about which an article was published in *Nord-Matin*.¹³⁹ *La Croix du Nord* published a brief article explaining the origins of the *Rue Léon Trulin* in 1954¹⁴⁰ – in 1970, almost exactly the same text appeared in *Nord-Matin*.¹⁴¹ Further articles appeared on Trulin,¹⁴² each time retelling his story in minute detail, often appearing to be based on Kah’s hagiographic account or previous reporters’ work – and sometimes the facts were incorrect. All this is telling. An article on Trulin published in *Nord-Éclair* in November 1990 detailed his story. At one point, the author remarked that ‘En 1915, il quitte Lille pour s’engager dans l’armée française [...] On connaît la suite. L’arrestation, la trahison de l’un des leurs, le jugement...[sic]’¹⁴³ Many words – three columns – are devoted to ‘la suite,’ suggesting that these events were in fact not very well known. However, the article concluded by contradicting this supposition somewhat, noting that each year the students of the *école Léon Trulin* – where a statue of Trulin had been placed in 1978¹⁴⁴ – went ‘fleurir la stèle élevée en souvenir de celui [sic] dans le fossé de la Citadelle.’¹⁴⁵ The same author again wrote about Trulin on the anniversary of his execution in 1995, for a different local publication. His introduction is representative of the trends surrounding the memory of the occupation by this period, noting incorrectly that Trulin had never been awarded the *Légion d’Honneur*.¹⁴⁶ This may be indicative of poor journalism as much as a fading memory, but the two are not

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, note by adjoint du Maire, December 1962.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, *Nord-Matin* (8th November 1946).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, *Croix* (6th August 1954).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* *Nord-Matin* (25th September 1970).

¹⁴² See, for example, *ibid.*, *Croix* (3rd November 1954); *Voix* (7-8th November 1965, 5th March 1978); *Le p’tit Lillo*, 6 (November 1974).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, *Nord-Éclair* (9th November 1991).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, *Nord-Matin* (5th March 1978); *Voix* (5th March 1978).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, *Nord-Éclair* (9th November 1991).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, *Métro* (8th November 1995).

mutually exclusive (for the author would be expected to know these details if Trulin's memory were alive and well).

Further, numerous articles appeared regarding de Bettignies, whether celebrating her as a local heroine,¹⁴⁷ commemorating her arrest or death¹⁴⁸ explaining the story behind monuments and works of art dedicated to her,¹⁴⁹ or even reporting the death of her oldest brother as a means to discuss her heroism.¹⁵⁰ The deaths of her co-resisters were also reported.¹⁵¹ Recent articles on de Bettignies are visible on the website of local newspapers.¹⁵² Yet, as Darrow noted, asking a *Nordiste* or *Lillois* who de Bettignies was usually elicits the response that she was probably a resister of the Second World War.¹⁵³

Likewise, the *Comité Jacquet* has received a certain amount of press attention since 1945, with articles similar in style and content to the above,¹⁵⁴ including reports of the death of Jacquet's daughter,¹⁵⁵ and of a collaborator of the *Comité*.¹⁵⁶ The repetitiveness of the stories, their similarities, and the constant rediscovery of old heroes suggests that even the official occupation narrative of resistance had been reduced to a journalistic memory – a regional memory held and promoted by those with an interest in and knowledge of local history. Clearly, these reports attempted to evoke the heroism of the occupation, perhaps to locate the experience of 1914-18 within the resistance myth that grew out of the

¹⁴⁷ AML 4H77: *Word Magazine* (May 1970); *Voix* (11th November 1950; 12th, 14-15th, 18th August 1986); *Plein Nord*, 3606 (10th June 1975), 3619 bis (10th July 1975), 3695 (16th January 1976); *Nord-Matin* (7th May 1966, 9th November 1970).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, *Voix* (30th October 1965, 30th September 1988).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 28th August 1989; *Nord Éclair* (29th August 1989).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, *Voix* (27th September 1959). See also AML 4H75: *Voix* (4th May 1966; 22nd August 1984; 12th July 1987).

¹⁵¹ AML 4H78: *Voix* (13th October 1966, 7-8th May 1967, 18th October 1968); *Nord-Matin* (12th October 1966); *Nord Éclair* (18th October 1968).

¹⁵² See, for example, articles from *Voix*, accessed online on 29th August 2010, such as http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/Locales/Lille/actualite/Secteur_Lille/2008/09/09/article_monument-a-louise-de-bettignies-une-reno.shtml

¹⁵³ Darrow, *French Women*, p.283.

¹⁵⁴ AML 4H76: *Voix* (3rd, 11th, 25th November 1965; 30th June 1993); *Nord Éclair* (11-12th, 15-16th November 1961; 28th August, 23rd September 1964; 22nd September 1965; 22nd August 1971).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, *Voix* (9th April 1983).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 20th November 1953.

Second World War. But the *occupés* of 1914-18 had been neither combatants like the *poilus*, nor resisters like the *Résistance*. Their experience was and would always be a marginal one.

II – Conclusions

Beyond Occupied France, 1914-1918

From the initial German presence in September 1914 until their departure in October 1918 – and beyond – the experience of military occupation marked *Nordistes* profoundly. Theirs was a different war, set aside from the national experience, with only compatriots from other occupied departments understanding what they had lived through. All occupied French departments experienced hardship, suffering, *mauvaise conduite*, criminality, and resistance.¹ All struggled with the memory of occupation.² However, local specificities meant that *Nordistes* had faced a slightly different form of occupation. The populous and urban nature of the department meant that trends seen elsewhere were exemplified or distorted. Its position next to the Belgian border and proximity to the front – thus its militarised status – meant that daily sufferings were more extreme. If all occupied populations were ‘rats de laboratoire’ in the First World War,³ then *Nordistes* were the most important test subjects in France. Yet the way in which the population of the Nord responded to occupation was representative of a wider, French trend: the *culture de l’occupé*, a unique and often more spontaneous form of the French *culture de guerre*, was born from occupation itself. This was a culture created in response to genuine experience, not from Allied propaganda or official narratives, although it did rely on shared national tropes and pre-war mores. The wider French *culture de guerre* and concomitant support for the war began to collapse through internal contradictions after the indecisive battles of 1916,⁴ whereas the *culture de l’occupé* changed little throughout the war – even crystalising after it. This was partly because the

¹ See Nivet, *France*; Becker, *Cicatrices* and *Oubliés*; McPhail, *Silence*; Blancpain, *Quand Guillaume*; Fleury, *Sous la Botte*; Gromaire, *L’Occupation*; Yerta sisters, *Six Women*; Charles Calippe, *La Somme sous l’occupation allemande, 27 août 1914 – 19 mars 1917* (Paris, 1918); Marc Ferrand, *La ville mourut. St. Quentin, 1914-1917* (Paris, 1923).

² Becker, ‘Mémoire.’

³ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.13.

⁴ Smith et al., *France*, p.59; Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People* (Oxford, 1990), (trans.) Arnold Pomerans, pp.193-248.

occupés had little choice but to find ways of dealing with and understanding occupation, but *Nordistes* were not the only people faced with this challenge.

To what extent was the *culture de l'occupé* an international phenomenon? Belgium had a peacetime culture not radically different to that of France and especially the Nord. Its strong Catholicism, its economy and geography echoed the specificity of the Nord. Yet Belgium's occupation, although more complete, was less severe. Its juridical situation was different, as most of the country was under civilian, not military control.⁵ Perhaps because of the importance of Belgian neutrality and the country's very existence linked to international law, respectable resistance in particular was strong, especially written and other protests emanating from local notables such as mayors or the Bishop of Brussels.⁶ Symbolic resistance was also present,⁷ but most noticeable was the greater extent of active resistance, with hundreds more espionage-escape networks and clandestine publications.⁸ On the other side of the spectrum, variations of *mauvaise conduite* occurred. There was more ideological 'collaboration' in the form of *Flamenpolitik* – the Germans' attempt to pit the Flemish-speaking population against the Francophones, by providing the former with political and other benefits.⁹ Relations between Belgian women and Germans existed, and prostitution was a problem.¹⁰ As in the Nord, populations were expected to maintain a certain 'distance patriotique' from the Germans,¹¹ and anyone transgressing these norms would face opprobrium and potentially punishment.¹² Indeed, during and after the liberation, popular violence (head-shaving and other assaults on persons and property) and legal repression occurred on a much greater scale than in France.¹³ This

⁵ Becker, *Cicatrices*, p.123-4.

⁶ See, for example, *The Times* (6th December 1919); de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.120-1.

⁷ De Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.122-3.

⁸ Debruyne and Paternostre, *La Résistance*, p.19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.29-30; de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, pp. 251-85.

¹⁰ Aurore François, 'From Street Walking to the Convent: Child Prostitution Cases judged by the Juvenile Court of Brussels during World War One,' in *Untold War*, pp.151-77; Majerus, 'Prostitution.'

¹¹ Xavier Rousseaux and Laurence van Ypersele, 'La Grande Guerre comme contexte,' in *Patrie*, p.27.

¹² *Ibid.*, passim; de Schaepdrijver, *Belgique*, p.115-116.

¹³ Rousseaux and van Ypersele, *Patrie*, passim.

was probably because almost the entire country had been occupied, thus the government-in-exile wanted to reassert its authority but also remove the stain of occupation, which was the only national memory of the war. Local populations sought revenge against nationwide traitors, some of whom had displayed ideological treason. Yet the *culture de l'occupé* in Belgium was essentially the national *culture de guerre*.

Farther east, experiences differed. Two-thirds of the Kingdom of Romania had been occupied by the Central Powers from 1916 to 1918.¹⁴ The occupation was similarly accompanied by daily requisitions, forced labour, and repression,¹⁵ but involved stronger ideological collaboration, as the occupiers used local elites as administrators on a grander scale than in the west.¹⁶ Pro-German politicians took over government ministries, seeing it as an opportunity to shape the development of the country and reverse certain pre-war trends.¹⁷ Some among the wider population had friendly relations with the occupiers,¹⁸ but even here there were examples of passive resistance and open hostility.¹⁹

Ober Ost, the Eastern-Front occupation of 2.9 million people,²⁰ had a racial dimension. There were similarities to the occupations of northern France, Belgium and Poland, but it was different in its purely military rule (excluding natives from administration) and in the ideological terms in which the military state in the East was built.²¹ The Germans attempted, unsuccessfully through repression and forced labour, to remake the East in Germany's own image, to force *Kultur* on the allegedly barbaric population, thus creating a military utopia.²² As such, some more extreme versions of the *culture de l'occupé* occurred: resistance, for instance, took the form of banditry, which reached

¹⁴ Mayerhofer, 'Making Friends,' p.119.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.120.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.122.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.128.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.135.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.146-7.

²⁰ Liulevicius, *War Land*, p.30.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.7 et passim.

²² *Ibid.*, p.7-9, 61 et passim.

crisis proportions in 1917.²³ Resistance increased as the Germans' wartime situation worsened, involving a secret press, more armed resistance, and smuggling.²⁴ Arguably more so than the Western Front occupations, *Ober Ost's* successes and failures marked the next conflict, by shaping German views of the East.²⁵

The Occupation: 1940-44

During the Second World War, similar cultural frontiers were drawn up and breached by the French, although rarely with direct reference to the occupation of 1914-18.²⁶ Nevertheless, notions of correct and incorrect behaviour were developed,²⁷ the latter often labelled as a variation on the political term 'collaboration' – such as 'collaboration horizontale' to denote sexual relations between French women and Germans.²⁸ Naturally, this occupation was different because after the Armistice the French and Germans were no longer at war.²⁹ Ideological, political and economic collaboration was more frequent, largely because of the complex political constitution of France from 1940-44, with Vichy's *État Français* engaging in an official policy of state collaboration, and others adopting the ideology of collaborationism.³⁰ The black market, smuggling and crime appeared again as means of survival,³¹ and there was a variation on the notion of respectable social norms. For instance, socialist Jean Texcier recommended in his 1940 resistance tract *Conseils à l'occupé* that Frenchmen should be 'correct' with

²³ *Ibid.*, p.78-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.182-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.220.

²⁶ This was sometimes the case in former occupied areas like the Nord: Becker, 'D'une guerre.'

²⁷ Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation of France 1940-5* (London, 2002), p.74.

²⁸ Simonin, 'La collaboratrice'; Vinen, *Unfree*, pp.157-181; Gildea, *Marianne*, pp.73-9.

²⁹ Gildea, *Marianne*, p.71.

³⁰ Jackson, *Dark Years*, pp.139-235; Jean-Pierre Azéma, *La Collaboration (1940-1944)* (Paris, 1975); H. R. Kedward, *Occupied France: Collaboration and Resistance 1940-1944* (Oxford, 1985).

³¹ Vinen, *Unfree*, p.223-236; Dutourd, *Au Bon Beurre*.

Germans without being friendly.³² Yet he addressed himself only to men, encouraging punishment of women who consorted with the Germans.³³

Resistance also occurred on a larger scale, with even more varied forms, but especially clandestine/armed resistance in the latter years of the war.³⁴ The more expansive geographical and ideological scope of the occupation, and the fact that Vichy was the legitimate authority – having replaced the Third Republic³⁵ – meant that once the Vichy regime was overthrown, popular and legal ‘épurations’ were beyond anything imaginable in 1918.³⁶

The occupation of 1940-44 differed in other important ways from that of 1914-1918. Perhaps the most striking difference is the existence of the quasi-legal Vichy regime, and the different phases of occupation, with only partial occupation until 1942, which saw the complete occupation of the country – the latter more similar to occupied Belgium in 1914-18. These factors altered responses to the occupation and refracted choices, creating a kaleidoscopic array of moral conundrums and political preferences. The importance of ideology is evident, especially the role of the Communist Party, whose official line shifted from acceptance of the Germans (due to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) until Operation Barbarossa in summer 1941, at which point its members were encouraged to resist the Nazi presence. Communists thus played a leading role in many forms of resistance,³⁷ and throughout the resistance there were internecine squabbles based on political worldviews.³⁸ There was no Communist Party in the occupied Nord of 1914-18, and few political or ideological disagreements among those opposing the Germans.

³² Gildea, *Marianne*, p.74.

³³ Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.490.

³⁴ Kedward, *Occupied France*; Bennett, *Under*; Jackson, *Dark Years*, pp.385-523; Foot, *Resistance*.

³⁵ Although Vichy’s legality was debated: Jackson, *Dark Years*, p.133-136.

³⁶ See, for example, *ibid.*, pp.570-599; Virgili, *Femmes tondues*; Gildea, *Marianne*, pp.336-48.

³⁷ Kedward, *Occupied France*, p.56-7.

³⁸ Jackson, *Dark Years*, pp.447-474.

Another product of ideology was the treatment of Jews, with Vichy pursuing home-grown and Nazi-encouraged anti-Semitism, culminating in complicity in genocide on the part of French officials and aspects of the wider population.³⁹ The Jewish experience has since become, retrospectively, the dominant memory of this occupation: many French saw *themselves* as victims from 1940 to 1944, but now the Jews are the emblematic victims.⁴⁰ Thus guilt dominates the memory of 1940-44, whereas the inter-war memory of the occupation of 1914-18 was based on pride and anger – the French had been both victims and resisters, according to the official narrative. Indeed, suffering *became* resistance. This may explain the patriotic evocations of French historians studying the occupation of 1914-18.

The occupation of 1940-44 ended with a crescendo of violence. Armed resistance grew rapidly from 1942-3, faced increasing suppression, and was eventually re-invented after the Liberation.⁴¹ The occupied Nord in 1914-18 saw the reverse: it began with much violence, but was followed by a period of stabilisation, ending with a relatively peaceful liberation. The population's faith in the Allied victory and the willingness of notables to consult lawyers demonstrate that the *occupés* of 1914-18 were thinking in the long term. They were certain about the future, whereas the fate of *occupés* of 1940-44 became increasingly unclear, even as the tide turned against the Nazis. Without the civil war elements of 1940-44, after 1918 occupation behaviours would not be scrutinised as greatly – thus did not have to be remade or exaggerated. Also, the memory of the occupation of 1940-44 went through various stages: focused on the Gaullist Resistance until the tide turned in the 1970s and the Vichy Syndrome proper began.⁴² There was not enough time for the memory of the occupation of 1914-18 to be rethought, so it is unhelpful to compare these memories too closely.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.354-81; Vinen, *Unfree*, pp.133-155.

⁴⁰ Conan and Roussou, *Everpresent*, especially p.51.

⁴¹ See, for example, Henri Michel, *Histoire de la Résistance en France (1940-44)* (Paris, 1972), p.91, 99; Jackson, *Dark Years*, pp.402-505, 605-608; Gildea, *Marianne*, p.377-43.

⁴² See Roussou, *Vichy*; Alan Morris, *Collaboration and Resistance Reviewed: Writers and the "Mode Rétro" in Post-Gaullist France* (Oxford, 1992), p.35-6.

Perhaps the complexity of 1940-44 prevented a more singular *culture de l'occupé* developing in the vein of that of 1914-18 in the Nord, although naturally even this notion is an over-simplification of experiences and events – albeit one that aids our understanding of this particular occupation, and perhaps others. The *culture de l'occupé* of the Nord in 1914-18 was bound up with pre-war mores and tied to the Third Republic, whereas aspects of the occupation of 1940-44 were knowingly in direct opposition to such values.

The Nord, 1914-18

Nevertheless, in many ways the occupation of the Nord in 1914-1918 created precedents for that of the whole of France in 1940-44. Nowhere was this more visible than in the underlying feature of the *culture de l'occupé* – the moral-patriotic framework dictating what was correct and incorrect behaviour. Particularly regarding *mauvaise conduite*, there initially appears to have been little difference between the views held by the *occupés* and those held by non-occupied French authorities. Espionage and denunciation, commerce with and working for the enemy, all made one suspect. Yet whilst non-occupied authorities – especially the military – also focused on intimate or sexual relations with the Germans, this comprised a category apart. For many *occupés*, however, there was no real distinction between illegal and legal misconduct, between *intelligence avec l'ennemi* or *commerce avec l'ennemi*, and sexual/friendly relations. Both were, in their view, morally repugnant and comprised treason. In this sense, the *culture de l'occupé* was less forgiving than the French *culture de guerre* – despite the daily battle with the complexities of the occupation in which the *occupés* engaged. For the latter, a certain form of respectability was crucial: it was unbecoming to be on friendly terms with the enemy, especially if such relations led to expressions of joy, amusement, or to the dereliction of duty or abuse of power on the part of a representative of the Republic. The occupied Nord was undergoing a period of immense suffering, and the only respectable way to behave was to suffer with dignity – not to compromise oneself by consorting with the enemy, whatever the form.

Those who transgressed these norms became the object of disdain, although, beyond the attacks of 1915, rarely of violence. Indeed, the liberation was accompanied by surprisingly few popular reprisals, perhaps because of the centrality of respectability and faith in the law to the *culture de l'occupé*: it was hoped that the Republic would punish suspect individuals, and when this did not happen on a large enough scale, the population was disappointed. Yet the common belief in widespread *mauvaise conduite* meant that thousands of people who were investigated for or suspected of breaching respectable norms were not always guilty. The reality of *mauvaise conduite* is hard to assess, but the belief in widespread misconduct was central to the *culture de l'occupé*.

Another response to occupation in 1914-18 was an apparent rise in criminality – or at least frequent examples of criminality. With a weakened French police force, high levels of penury and unemployment, and problems of food supply, this is unsurprising; although the fact that numerous crimes were committed in a region under intense German surveillance is striking. For some *occupés*, the moral economy was altered, with crime becoming an acceptable form of survival. Theft provided the most obvious route to material well-being, but fraud and speculation also allowed many to increase their means. Yet for the majority of *occupés*, such acts were irresponsible, exploiting and threatening the lives of compatriots and the functioning of relief operations. They represented a lack of solidarity, and clear examples of unrespectability. The youth of the Nord were often perpetrators, thus it was believed by some that high levels criminality threatened the future of the department. By engaging in *mauvaise conduite* and criminality, certain *Nordistes* betrayed their compatriots and proved that the *Union Sacrée* was as much a myth in the occupied area as it was elsewhere in France.

However, other *occupés* engaged in acts that defined the other extreme of the *culture de l'occupé*. Local notables engaged in respectable resistance, a form of opposition to the Germans reflecting all that the *culture de l'occupé* prized: patriotic sentiment, opposition to the Germans, the primacy of French and international law, and a fulfilment of a

perceived duty. The respect shown in the language and content of letters of protest, however performative, tied into the *culture* by avoiding rash actions which could further endanger the lives of compatriots and at the same time demonstrating the perceived moral superiority of the *occupés*. Regardless of its success or failure, respectable resistance fed back into the representations and understandings comprising this *culture*, highlighting the injustice of the situation, proffering examples of *belle conduite*, and by proxy ostracising further those engaging in *mauvaise conduite*. For the wider population, symbolic resistance provided an outlet for patriotic sentiment and thus another form of opposition to the German presence; it strengthened local and national identities, exacerbating the position of those who breached the acceptable norms of this community – such individuals became veritable community aliens.

Occasionally, active resistance occurred, comprising the most explicit and dangerous refusal of the German presence. Such acts were perceived as noble and heroic incarnations of patriotism, thus the purest adherence to the *culture de l'occupé* – and indeed to wider French *culture de guerre*. Active resistance gave certain *occupés* a sense of agency, and reinforced their understanding of themselves as combatants in the war – they were both victims and, eventually, victors. It was this understanding that was emphasised in the inter-war period via local memory, which sought to remember the sufferings of the occupation at the same time as the professed heroism and dignity of the *occupés*. National memory and recognition focused on similar themes, but it was on the local level that this separate experience was most remembered, whether through texts, ceremonies or monuments. The notion of widespread *mauvaise conduite* was largely erased from this altered inter-war *culture de l'occupé*, one praising heroes and victims, itself representing a particular response to the occupation. Yet despite an embryonic form of the duty to memory held by some *Nordistes*, this *culture* and the remembrance of the occupation had begun to fade by the late 1930s. This occupation was a lived experience, an uncomfortable one which cast aside the *occupés* from the national

narrative of the war. Many wanted to forget or to look to the future, and even those supporting remembrance appear to have lost enthusiasm as time passed.

The larger occupation of 1940-44 and its important cultural ramifications for the French finally overshadowed the collective memory of the occupation of 1914-18. Although some echoes of this painful past did survive, the understanding of what occupation meant was forever changed, and French cultural consciousness linked (and links) the very word 'occupation' with that of the Second World War. Yet themes now primarily associated with 1940-44 can be seen, reconfigured and with important differences, in the *Nordistes'* response to and understanding of the occupation of 1914-18. In this earlier period, a certain conception of treason and collaboration existed, as did examples of survival via criminality (including black marketeering and fraud), and resistance or opposition to the Germans. Lacking some of the political complexities of Second World War France, the occupation of the Nord in the First World War nevertheless possessed its own unique attributes. It was a considerably harsher occupation during a very different war, confined to a border region where identities had always been fluid. However, when faced with the national enemy, certain forms of identity crystallised, and with them a mutated form of the wider *culture de guerre*. Cut off from the rest of the country, *Nordistes* had to make sense of the war, to understand it, and to survive this complex situation. In short, they had to *respond* to the German presence, and despite the strict nature of the occupation, they did so in numerous ways, making complicated decisions. The *occupés* were neither heroes nor villains, although they often saw each other as such; nor too were they simply the victims they and others portrayed them as. Instead, they were all and none at the same time – individuals trying to navigate the moral-patriotic minefield of the first total occupation. Their own occupied war culture provided an intangible map, based on cultural norms as much as perception and rumour. It was a map that would be redrawn in the inter-war period, drawn upon occasionally in the Second World War, and then replaced after 1945.

Encountering the Germans reinforced the patriotism for some; provided opportunities for others; led to suffering for many; but for all, it forced them to make choices about their responses to occupation. The variety of choices made was greater and more complex than has been traditionally stated. In total war, faced with total occupation, the occupied Nord became a cultural-patriotic battleground, and the victor was the *culture de l'occupé*. Yet the victory was only temporary, and from 1945 until the 1990s, the occupation and its unique *culture* were largely forgotten. This thesis highlights the complexities of this neglected occupation.

The experience of occupation in the Nord was based around moral-patriotic norms and codes, comprising a reconfigured moral economy – a new consensus about what acts were considered legitimate or illegitimate. Some adapted to the German presence with various forms of complicity, and others engaged in various forms of what James C. Scott has called acts of ‘everyday resistance.’⁴³ Respectable and active resistance also occurred, as did criminality, all at different points on the spectrum of the new moral economy. The theoretical models of Thompson and Scott were initially based on pre-modern, pre-industrial or non-western economies and societies, and in recent years the focus has migrated further from the industrial world.⁴⁴ Yet the experience of the Nord demonstrates that there is no reason why these models should not apply to an industrial area.

Further, a central element of both scholars’ analysis is their reluctance to establish a clear moral hierarchy: they see people drawing on a complicated range of traditions, making decisions to ensure their survival – no choice is inherently good or bad. This approach works well for examining occupation, but is especially useful for examining that of the Nord in the First World War. The historian must not view resistance as positive and, despite the literal meaning of the term, *mauvaise conduite* as negative. These legitimate

⁴³ Scott, ‘Resistance,’ and *Weapons*.

⁴⁴ Arnold, ‘Rethinking,’ p.86.

objects of study should be seen as expressions of contemporary culture; any value judgements must be those of contemporaries, relayed and studied by the historian. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of events. Such subtlety is missing from most studies of occupied France in the First World War – Francophone historians in particular often view this occupation through the lens of the *culture de guerre*, which combines with the memory of 1940-44 to create an overly patriotic take on occupation.

The concept of *cultures de guerre* has also been central to my thesis, allowing me to demonstrate the existence of a new variant, a *culture de l'occupé*, containing striking precursors to the occupied culture of 1940-44 – but with unique, interesting attributes. In combining theoretical notions surrounding the moral economy, resistance, and *cultures de guerre*, I have produced a history of responses to the occupation, and of choices made. I avoid judgement, but that of contemporaries features prominently. Ultimately, I hope that my thesis represents a more nuanced history of the occupied Nord in the First World War, with potential implications for our understanding of the occupation of 1940-44 and perhaps beyond.

Appendix

Figure 1: Electoral map of 1914 for the Nord-Pas-de-Calais (the Nord is located to the right of the red border). From Hilaire, *Histoire du Nord-Pas-de-Calais*, p.166.

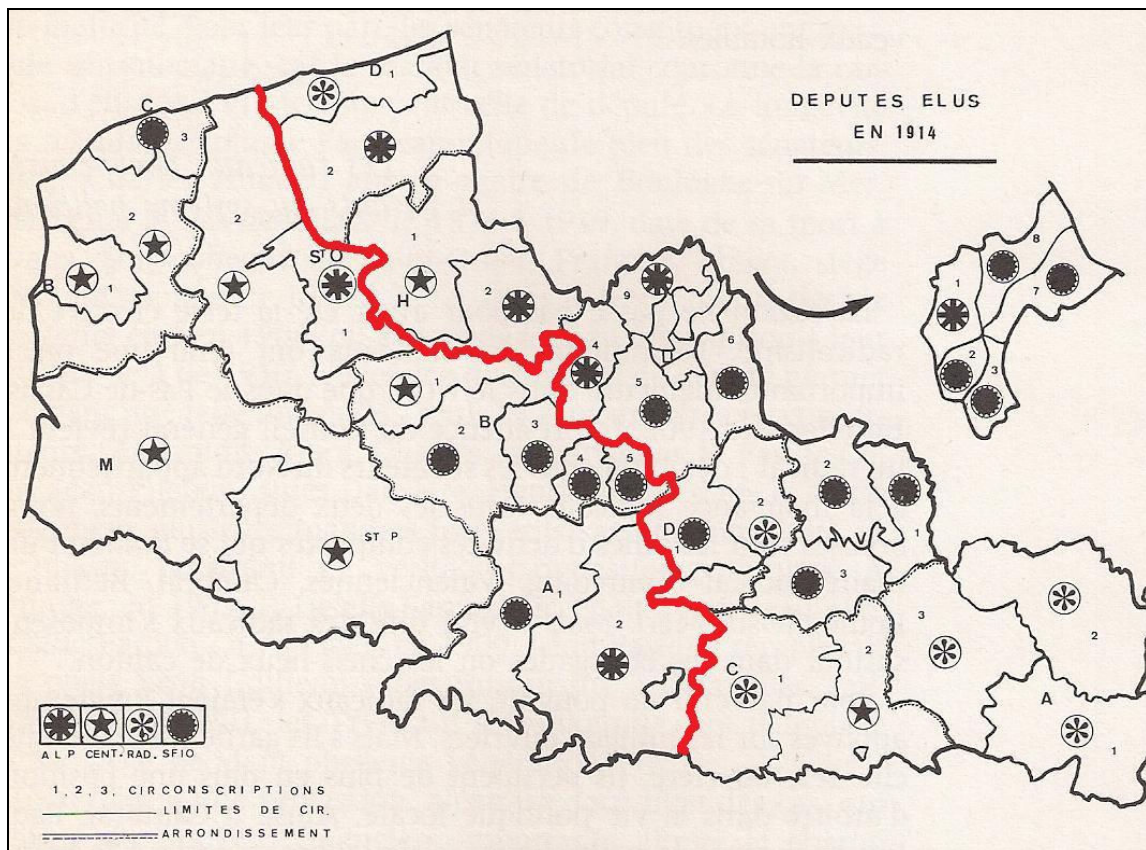


Figure 2: Map of occupied France from Nivet, *La France occupée 1914-1918*, p.6.



Figure 3.1: ADN 9R1193, postcard (face)



Figure 3.2: Postcard (reverse)

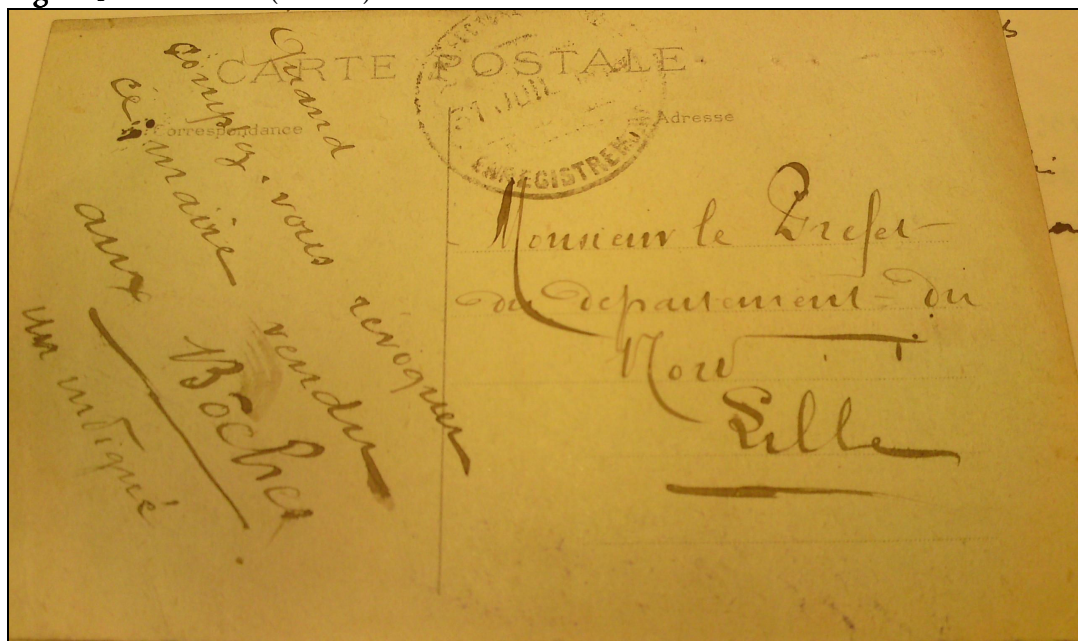


Figure 3.3: Postcard (face)



Figure 3.4: Postcard (reverse)

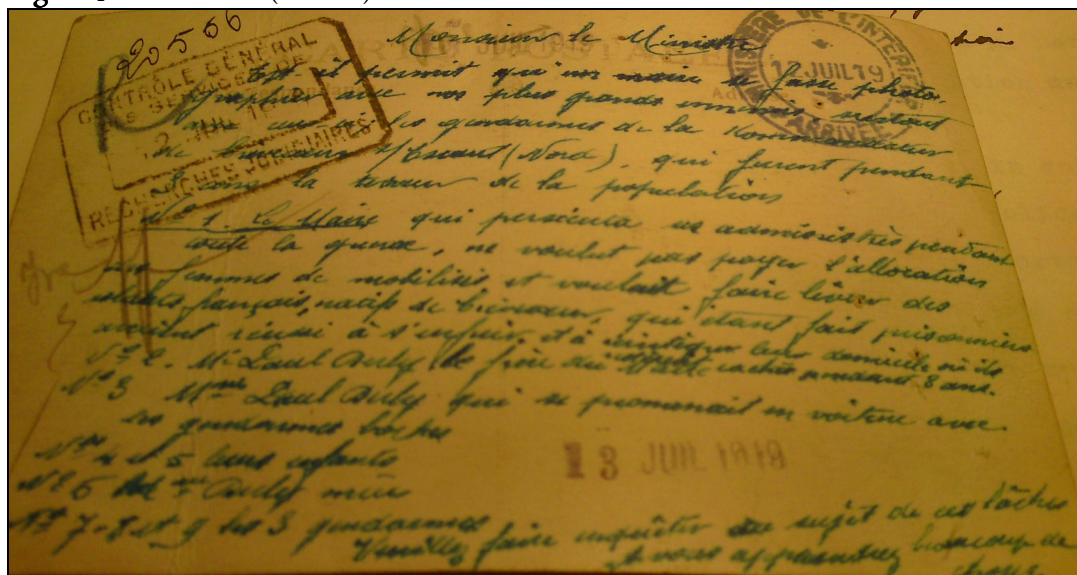


Figure 4: ADN 9R1229, photograph of son of the mayor of Marcq-en-Barœul with a German soldier.



Figure 5: ADN 9R580, report of Commissaire de Police Boinet, 7th April 1916.

VILLE DE LILLE
Commissariat de Police
du 8^e arrondissement.

Lille, le 7 Avril 1916.

COPIE

R A P P O R T

J'ai l'honneur de porter à la connaissance de Monsieur le Commissaire Central les faits suivants:

Hier soir, 6 Avril, ayant été retenu pour affaires de service et ayant manqué mon tramway, je rentrais à mon domicile sis rue Barthélemy Delespaul, un peu après 8 heures. A 8 heures 35 exactement, en traversant la place Philippe Lebon, je fus interpellé par un soldat de la police allemande qui était accompagné d'un camarade. Comme l'interpellation était prononcée sur le ton d'une conversation et que j'étais à une certaine distance - au moins 30 à 40 mètres - je ne compris pas tout d'abord et ce n'est qu'à la deuxième sommation, que, distinguant plus nettement l'avis qui m'était adressé, je m'arrêtai et allai même vers le soldat - la conversation suivante s'engagea, alors:

D. Vous circulez après l'heure ?
R. C'est exact, mais je suis Commissaire de police !
D. Donnez-moi votre carte d'identité !
R. La voici.
D. Vous n'avez pas le droit de circuler après l'heure !
R. Comment, dans ces conditions, voulez-vous que j'assure mon service ainsi que mes collègues. Les agents ont le droit et la mission de circuler toute la nuit. Or, les agents sont sous nos ordres. C'est donc bien le moins que nous, leurs chefs, ayons les mêmes prérogatives pour les surveiller et valuer, le cas échéant, aux besoins du service, d'autant que l'un de nous est toujours de service de nuit. C'est la logique même.
D. Ne vous énervez pas !!
R. Je ne m'énerve pas. Je vous explique. Maintenant si vous ne croyez pas à ma qualité, voici une carte que j'ai déjà présentée à plusieurs reprises et qui indique exactement ma qualité et pourquoi je suis dehors. Je l'ai fait établir pour, le cas échéant, ne faire connaître et comprendre par vos camarades de la police qui ne connaissent pas le français, car, moi, j'ignore l'allemand.
D. Vous n'avez pas le droit de circuler sans laissez-passer !
R. Un particulier quelconque, oui, c'est certain; mais un Commissaire de police chargé d'un service public dont les subordonnés sont eux-mêmes pourvus de ce droit, ne saurait lui-même en être privé. C'est la logique même, je le répète.
D. Je conserve votre carte d'identité et la carte que vous avez fait établir ! Venez demain matin à 9 heures (allemande) au bureau de police militaire, rue Brûle Maison !
R. Si vous voulez.
D. Si vous voulez ???
R. Mais oui, si vous voulez. Je ne vous dis rien de malhonnête. vous n'avez donc pas à vous froisser.
Là dessus, je partis.

Ce matin, 7 Avril, tandis que je procédais à ma toilette avant de me rendre au bureau de police militaire qui m'avait été indiqué, j'entendis tout à coup dans l'escalier de la maison - il était exactement 7 heures 35" (français) un vacarme extraordinaire. Je vins ouvrir la porte de mon appartement et demandai ce que cela signifiait. Un soldat de la police militaire, celui-là même qui m'avait interpellé la veille au soir, était dans l'escalier du 1^{er} au 3^e étage (j'habite au 3^e) et me cria d'une voix furieuse: "Vous n'entendez pas ! Vous n'entendez pas ! Qu'est-ce que cela signifie !" Non, répondis-je, je n'ai pas entendu. Je me trouvais dans ma cuisine et les portes étant fermées, je n'ai rien entendu.

J'ai sonné ! Comme on n'ouvrait pas, j'ai enfoncé la porte !
Les sonnettes ne fonctionnent pas. Il n'y a donc rien d'étonnant à ce que je n'aie pu répondre. Et puis, pouvais-je prévoir votre visite à mon domicile une demi-heure avant l'heure que vous m'aviez fixée, non point chez moi, mais au bureau de police militaire ?
On m'a dit de venir vous porter votre carte d'identité afin que vous puissiez sortir pour faire votre service.
Dans ces conditions, dois-je toujours me présenter au bureau de police militaire que vous m'avez indiqué ?
Non, on vous convoquera. Votre carte portant le cachet de votre bureau

Figure 6: ADN 9R254, photo of Jules Claeys.

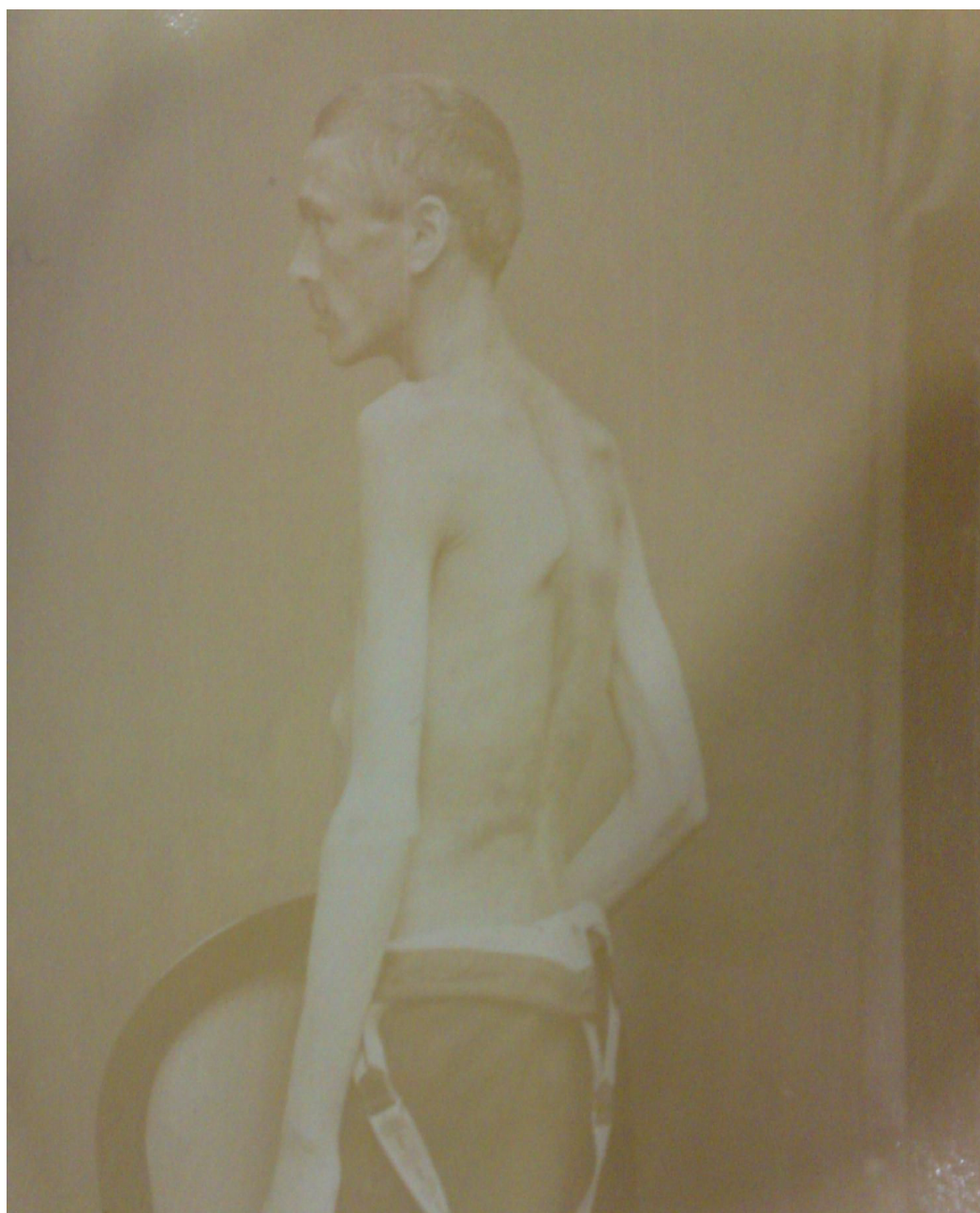


Figure 7: ADN 9R693, extract of the transcript of the conversation between the mayor of Lille and Captain Himmel, 24th June 1915.

tionnera pas la question?

M. DELESALLE. - Je le crois, car je refuserai de la payer, ce qui vous obligera à m'incarcérer, et d'ailleurs les ouvriers ne s'impressionnent en aucune façon des amendes infligées à la ville, car ils savent que ce n'est pas eux qui paieront.

Capitaine HIMMEL. - Si nous supprimions tout secours aux nécessiteux?

M. DELESALLE. - Serez vous que la Ville entretient aujourd'hui de ses deniers les trois quarts de sa population?

Capitaine HIMMEL. - Nous ne toucherions pas aux allocations militaires, mais seulement au secours des chômeurs.

M. DELESALLE. - Sans insister sur le caractère odieux qu'auraient pareille mesure et dont je devrais devant l'histoire vous laisser toute la responsabilité, laissez-moi vous faire remarquer:

- 1° Que je considérerai votre ordre comme non-avenu et que je continuerai à payer;
- 2° Qu'il faudra donc que vous envoyiez votre police dans les différents locaux où l'on paiera et que vous saisissiez l'argent.

Capitaine HIMMEL. - Nous pourrions, en effet, saisir l'argent, punir ceux qui paieraient et ceux qui viendraient pour recevoir.

M. DELESALLE. - Dans ce cas, je ne distribuerai plus d'argent, mais des bons de nourriture.

Capitaine HIMMEL. - Nous pourrions aussi empêcher la distribution de ces bons.

M. DELESALLE. - Il ne me resterait alors qu'une dernière ressource pour empêcher ces malheureux de mourir de faim, c'est de leur envoyer chercher gratuitement du pain et des légumes dans les locaux du Comité américain, qui sont hors de votre atteinte.

Capitaine HIMMEL. - C'est vrai, - Là nous ne pourrions rien faire. Le problème est vraiment bien difficile à résoudre. Il faut pourtant que vous nous aidiez à trouver un moyen. Il y a pour nous une question de principe. Nous ne pouvons pas revenir sur une déci-

Figure 8: *Liller Kriegszeitung*, n°24, 25th February 1915.

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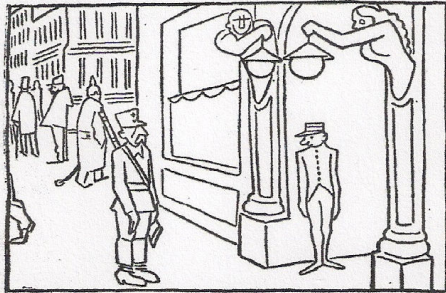

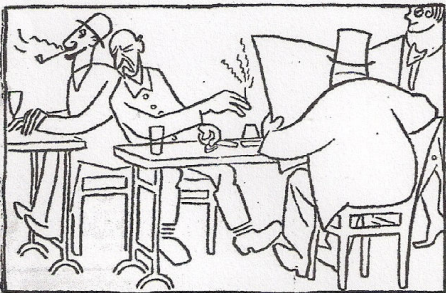


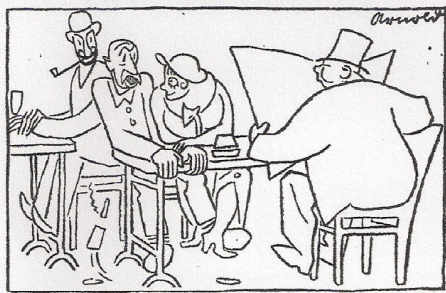
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Ringsflugblätter

Lüblatt zur Liller Ringszeitung

Nummer 24. Lille, den 25. Februar 1915.

**Wie der Landsturmann Alois Kietzenberg in Lille ganz aus Versehen in
franzoesische Gefangenschaft kam.**

„Alsdann, warum soll da Kietzenberg net amal in a feines Restaurant!“

„Blutsakra, da ham's no die stinkat'n! Schwefelholz'n!“

„Ja, schaug grad, der ah, da bist ja koan Momang sicher.“

„Jesse na, bei dem Durst die kloane Glas'n!“

„Ja, wos is denn does, da speibst ja da feinste Herr pfeilgrad ins Lokal!“

„Herrgotts Karsong! Karsong! Zah'n!“

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314

Figure 9: NA WO 106/45, extract from a questionnaire dropped by Allied planes into occupied France and Belgium.

4

Quelles sont les localités que les Allemands ont fait évacuer ?

ont-elles été évacuées?

on prévenue d'autres de leur évacuation prochaine?

as?

A quelle date?

Les Allemands font-ils des tranchées?

Indiquez les emplacements par leur distance à des localités, ou chemin de fer, ou routes, ou rivières, ou ruisseaux, ou châteaux, etc.

Description des travaux

Le travail a commencé le

Ils emploient comme main d'œuvre

Décharge-t-on du gravier?

Y a-t-il des bétonneuses?

Le travail est-il terminé?

Y a-t-il un réseau de fil de fer?

La ligne de travaux se prolonge-t-elle?

Des habitants de votre région ont-ils été réquisitionnés par des travaux semblables?

Où sont ces travaux?

Quand ont-ils été commencé?

Comment sont ces travaux?

des inondations?

Comment?

Y a-t-il des dépôts de munitions dans votre voisinage?

Eventuellement où (indiquez situation le plus exactement possible)

Depuis quand?

ALGEMEENE BEMERKINGEN:--

A-t-on construit récemment de nouveaux aérodromes dans votre région?

Le travail a commencé ce

exacte du nouvel Aerodrome?

Leur contenu?

Y a-t-il des canons contre-avions dans votre région?

Eventuellement ou?

VERDERE INLICHTINGEN.

REMARQUE GÉNÉRALE :--

Dans le cas où vous ne seriez pas absolument sûr d'un renseignement que vous donnez, indiquez-nous sur quoi vous vous basez pour donner ce renseignement: vous nous aiderez beaucoup.

De même, quand vous évaluez la force d'une troupe.

Lorsque vous ne savez pas, inscrivez: je ne sais pas.

Lorsqu'il n'y a pas de troupes dans les environs, dites: il n'y en a pas.

Ce renseignement est très utile aussi.

Même si vous ne pouvez renseigner que sur votre localité seule, vos renseignements nous aideront.

RENSEIGNEMENTS SUPPLEMENTAIRES

Figure 10: AN F23/373: Médaille des Victimes de l'Invasion, 1914-1918, bronze, awarded to M. Huet, from Laon (Aisne), 28th February 1922.



Figure 11: Monument des Fusillés in Lille.



Figure 12: Monument on the tomb of Maertens (photo from AML 4 H 76, booklet in commemoration of Georges Maertens).



MONUMENT ÉLEVÉ A LA MÉMOIRE DE GEORGES MAERTENS
AU CIMETIÈRE DE L'EST A LILLE

ŒUVRE DU SCULPTEUR M. EDGAR BOUTTRY

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9 R 251-4, 256-7: Documents concerning the Assistance Publique, its *colonies* and *pupilles*.

- 9 R 283: Documents on *fonctionnaires* seeking evacuation during the occupation.
- 9 R 310: Petitions from railway workers asking to be paid more.
- 9 R 313: Documents concerning teachers punished by the Germans.
- 9 R 325: Documents concerning the justice system and Franco-German jurisdiction.
- 9 R 328: Various documents concerning French justice, police investigations, and fraud.
- 9 R 353-60: Various documents concerning Loos prison and prisoners,
- 9 R 374, 376-7: Documents on the *colonie industrielle de St-Bernard*.
- 9 R 506-20: Various documents concerning Hellemmes, Lesquin, Loos, Lambersart, Seclin, Sainghin, Roubaix, Anstaing, Baisieux, Bondues, Cambrai, Camphin-en-Pévèle, Cappelle, Condé, Croix, Denain, Douai, Flers, Halluin, Habourdin, Lannoy and Lezennes. Also many German posters.
- 9 R 556-8: Extraits des procès-verbaux de la Commandature de Lille, 1914-1915.
- 9 R 580-9: Police reports for Lille, 1916-1918; other police documents from across the Nord, some hint at political disunity, monitoring anti-Republican and anti-patriotic sentiment. Also contains documents concerning prostitution and various charitables *fêtes* and organisations.
- 9 R 616: Lists of dead or missing soldiers, linked to the fire at Lille's *Hôtel de ville*.
- 9 R 626: Various documents on public health

9 R 632: Documents regarding the death of Florine Tersin, a begger, in Lille, December 1917.

9 R 635: Documents on the work carried out on Lille's theatre.

9 R 654-8: Documents concerning the lodging of Allied soldiers and resulting hostage-taking, the *fusillés Lillois*, some French people working for the Germans, and some instances of breaking German regulations.

9 R 661: Clippings of the *Justice militaire allemande* section of the *Bulletin de Lille*, 1915-1918.

9 R 668: Correspondence between the mayor of Lille and von Henrich regarding lists of *indigents*.

9 R 693-5: Documents regarding the *affaire des sacs* in Lille, including Franco-German correspondence and posters, as well as refusals to provide lists of French personnel in 1916.

9 R 697-8: Forced labour and evacuations from Lille, 1916-1917.

9 R 701-75: Mostly German posters from across the Nord. Also some documents concerning the communes of Tourcoing, Templeuve, Lille, Loos, Orchies, Wambrechies, Wattrelos, Quesnoy-sur-Deule, Roncq, and Roubaix (9 R 726-35 – including copies of the *Bulletin de Roubaix*, documents on the *affaire Orlianges* and the alleged denunciation of hidden soldiers).

9 R 792: German posters, including the rules on correspondence in occupied France and Belgium.

9 R 794-99: Documents on Loos prison, the *Maison d'arrêt* of Lille, and German condemnations including the arrest and punishment of *député* M. Inghels, a teacher, and a priest.

9 R 822: Documents including 'Comparution de M. le Maire devant le Juge pour la publication, en France, de lettres de protestation contre l'évacuation forcée par l'Autorité allemande,' 7th August 1916.

9 R 827: Documents on the deportations from Tourcoing of 1916 and 1917.

9 R 841: Franco-German correspondence, including protests, concerning forced labour and deportation, 1916-1917.

9 R 848: Documents concerning *fonctionnaires* requisitioned for forced labour by the Germans, 1917-1918.

9 R 914: Correspondence with the Préfet du Nord at Dunkirk concerning family members in the occupied Nord.

9 R 925: Reports on clerical anti-Republic/patriotic sentiment in the unoccupied Nord.

9 R 973-9: Copies of resistance tracts/newspapers from the occupied Nord (*L'Oiseau de France*, *L'Echo de France*, *La Patience* and other names).

9 R 1187: Official documents and proclamations from the liberation of the Nord.

9 R 1190-3: Documents on the situation in the Nord in November 1918 - summaries, police and other investigations, pillage and destruction, and calls for central government aid.

9 R 1196-7: Liberation and post-war investigations into suspect occupation behaviour (mainly concerning women).

9 R 1229: Post-war investigations into suspect occupation behaviour (mainly by local notables).

9 R 1240-55: Reports of attacks on suspect individuals in October 1918; documents on reconstruction, the immediate post-liberation situation, the effects of the occupation, and the Allied re-occupation.

9 R 1288: Documents concerning how to find out information about family members in the liberated regions.

9 R 1293-4: Lists of refugees, evacuees and civilian prisoners who died in the Nord during the occupation.

9 R 1310: Documents on the memory of the occupation, especially monuments and museums. The carton actually states the reference as '9 R 1130.'

15 J 84-8: Call from the Comité départementale d'études historiques to create a collection of documents regarding the occupation of the Nord, followed by the documents themselves – including the Commission Historique du Nord questionnaires, copies of German posters, typed memoirs, and minutes of municipal meetings.

16 J 99: Mémoires de Madeleine Berroyer de Novembre 1914 à Juin 1916, plus local newspaper clippings concerning Berroyer.

70 J 213: Documents on the creation of commemorative plaques and monuments in honour of the Fusillés Lillois (1922).

70 J 215: Monuments aux morts, 1922-27.

70 J 349: Documents on the commemoration of the 16th anniversary of the death of Léon Trulin (7-8th November 1931).

73 J 2: Copy of *L'Industrie en France occupée, ouvrage établi par le grand quartier général allemand en 1916, traduction intégrale* (Paris, 1923).

74 J 181: All wartime copies of the *Bulletin de Guerre des Facultés Catholiques de Lille*.

74 J 223-5: Documents from London demonstrating Allied knowledge of the deportations of 1916; Journal de M. Trollin, directeur de l'école Rollin, Lille, 1914-1918; Journal de M. Blin, instituteur en retraite at Auchy-les-Orchies (1914-1918).

74 J 240-3: Personal papers of Pierre Dumont, 'représentant de commerce, a été employé comme interprète à la mairie de Lille de 1914 à 1919.'

74 J 244: Collection of German newspapers.

74 J 260: Photo albums – 'Album de la Grande Guerre, no. 29, 1917' and '*Der Grosse Krieg in Bildern* (No.1, 1915).' Also contains many German posters.

87 J 1-6: Collection of publications on the occupation including: C.P., *Quatre Années de Domination Allemande à Lille, Heures de Loisirs d'un Occupé, Vendu au profit des Orphelins indigents de l'œuvre des "Courettes Lilloises"*; Couvreur, *A Propos de Bottes, Chansons d'Occupation* (Lille, 1919); André Fage, *Lille sous la Griffé Allemande, Tous les Arrêtés Municipaux, Toutes les Proclamations et Affiches de l'Autorité Allemande du 24 Août 1914 au 1^{er} Décembre 1915 suivis d'un Etat chronologique des faits principaux*

et de l'état civil de Lille (Paris, 1917); *Le Monde Illustré* (18th June 1921), special edition on reconstruction in the Nord.

124 J 3-4: Papers of Charles-Louis Rémy, 'adjoint au maire de Lille pendant la guerre'; and copies of *Le Bruxellois*.

145 J 1: Souvenirs de guerre de Cambrai.

142 J 4: Journal de P.P Desrumaux sur l'occupation de Lille par les Allemands (1914-18).

J 3/5: Notes on the war by Émile Théodore, conservateur of the Musée de Lille.

J 959: Journal of Joseph Noyelle, avocat, docteur en Droit, secrétaire du Syndicat des Peigneurs à Roubaix, 1905-1932

J 1035/37: Various poems, songs and Belgian resistance tracts/papers such as *La Libre Belgique*.

J 1186: Documents on wartime medals and songs, from military perspective.

J 1214: Travail des enfants pour les Allemands.

J 1699: Translations of *Liller Kriegszeitung*.

J 1761: Seemingly the text of a speech given by Pierre Mille in post-war London at a conference about the occupation.

J 1772: German posters in Roubaix, and documents on the requisition of copper in Tourcoing.

J 1933: Manuscrit de François Rouesel, 'Pendant la C.C.I [Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie] de Roubaix durant l'occupation allemande'

J 1950: Journal de guerre, of Pierre Motte (1861-1947), notaire à Lille.

30 Fi Coll. C. Boquet : Collection of photos, postcards, extracts from books/book reviews on 1914-1918, as well as the Second World War.

2 U 1/444-8: Arrêts of the Cour d'Assises du Département du Nord, 1919-24.

2 U 1/571: Dossier de procédure criminelle contre Léon Martinage, négociant à Roubaix, accusé d'intelligence avec l'ennemi.

2 U 2/515: Numerous documents concerning individuals under investigation for *intelligence avec l'ennemi* across the Nord, including *procès-verbaux* and dossiers from various *cours*.

3 U 258/564: Dossier d'infraction à la loi du 5 avril 1914. Propos défaitistes.

3 U 274/174: Procès-verbaux from 1918 regarding pro-German sentiment.

3 U 303/6-7: Dossiers de procédure correctionnelle pour intelligence avec l'ennemi.

3 U 281/31-78: Dossiers de procédure pour intelligence avec l'ennemi, non-lieux.

3 Z 140, 4 Z 34, 4 Z 207, 6 Z 39, M 127/92: Médaille de la Reconnaissance française attribuée aux otages, déportés et brassards rouges.

M 127/124: Villes décorées pour faits de guerre.

M 161/31-3: Documents on the funeral services for the Fusillés Lillois and Louise de Bettignies, and exhibitions on the occupation.

M 208/9: Réorganisation de la police dans les régions libérées.

M 229/10: Roubaix, rapport sur l'état sanitaire et social pendant l'occupation.

M 417/10139: Lille: distilleries clandestines De Cannière & Cie, G Ledieu, 1917.

Archives municipales de Lille (AML)

4H 4: Various documents including letters from local notables concerning war contributions, and German posters.

4H 29-30: Documents concerning German newspapers in Lille, including lists of *occupés* who were authorised to receive translations, and extracts of such translations.

4H 60: Translations of *Lille in Deutscher Hand*.

4H 61: Information on books published after 1918 concerning Lille's occupation.

4H 68: List of all condemnations published in the *Bulletin de Lille* throughout the occupation.

4H 68 bis: *Plein Nord* articles on Pierre Dumont.

4H 74-8: Various documents – occupation posters, newspaper articles, exhibition programmes – concerning *Lillois* resisters such as Trulin, de Bettignies, and the Comité Jacquet.

4H 80: Documents concerning French civilian hostages in Germany.

4H 90: Lists of those forcibly evacuated/deported from Lille in 1916, plus letters of protest.

4H 92: Letters of *Lillois* to the mayor and other documents concerning the 1916 deportations.

4H 103: Various documents concerning the CANF in Lille.

4H 109: List of CANF personnel.

4H 117: Various documents concerning possible fraud and outlining shortages.

4H 120-3: Various documents concerning thefts, refusals to work, the *affaire des sacs*, forced labour, and forced evacuations.

4H 126: Documents on sick and injured forced labourers.

4H 128: Various documents on forced labour, evacuations, and the 'Péril vénérien.'

4H 134: Correspondance between Germans the municipality, including municipal resistance.

4H 143: Documents concerning fraud and the falsification of money.

4H 145: Documents on German requisitions.

4H 200: Various French administrative documents, such as information on telephone lines.

4H 202-3: État-Civil and German censuses during the occupation.

4H 222: Documents on youth 'vagabondage' and crime.

4H 224-35: Documents concerning the combating of youth delinquency, the German presence at the University of Lille, and vocational education and apprenticeships during the occupation.

4H 257: Documents outlining the difficulties French industry faced during the occupation.

4H 265 bis: Documents concerning wartime prostitution.

4H 266-71: Police reports for Lille, 1914-1918.

4H 273-77: Various documents, including police reports outlining attacks on those believed to be working for the Germans, information on the composition of the police during the occupation, general damage and vandalism caused by the Germans, and a study on occupations in international law.

4H 279-83: Post-liberation local French newspapers, October 1918 until 31st December 1918.

4H 291: Post-liberation poems concerning the occupation.

4H 322-22bis: Documents from and concerning the first and second anniversaries of Lille's liberation.

4H 335-7: Clippings from local French newspapers concerning the occupation, from those of the interwar period to those celebrating the 50th anniversary of the invasion. Also some photos from the occupation.

4H 418: Documents concerning the commemoration of the occupation.

4H 427: Documents of German provenance, including postcards showing the siege of Lille.

1I4/11: Inter-war documents hinting that some occupation regulations governing the playing of music or *débîts de boisson* may have originated in wider culture.

1I1/548: Post-liberation documents detailing the rebuilding of the police force.

1I1/13-23: Police reports from 1940 (useful for comprisons).

Archives municipales de Tourcoing (AMT)

H 4 A 25: Various documents on the occupation of Tourcoing, the falsification of money, children in exile in Holland, and the Comité Historique du Nord questionnaires.

H 4 A 26: Copies of German posters, and the booklet *Tourcoing Libéré 17 Octobre 1918. Proclamation de l'Administration municipale. Visites: du Général Commandant des troupes britanniques, de M. le Président du Conseil des Ministres, de M. le Président de la République.*

H 4 A 27-33: Various documents including German posters, letters from *occupés* to the French administration, correspondence between the French and German authorities, and French police *procès-verbaux*. Some topics include crime, delinquency, the dog tax, clashes between German and French authorities, sanitary visits, municipal resistance, repatriations, the *affaire des sacs*, and post-liberation reconstruction.

H 4 A 38-40: Lists of those forcibly deported to the Ardennes, 1916-1917, and those evacuated in September 1918.

H 4 A 42: Lists of *rapatriés* and hostages.

I 1 B 23: Various documents including the liberation proclamation of the municipality.

4 J: Procès verbaux, judiciaries et administratives, 24 Aout 1907 au 21 septembre 1916.

Archives Nationales (AN)

BB/32/1-4: Dossiers des propositions pour la Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française, par ordre alphabétique des candidats, Ab-An.

BB/32/290: List of recipients of Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française.

BB/32/300-301: Further applications for the Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française.

F/23/14: Renseignements fournis par des rapatriés venant de la région envahie.

F/23/373-8: Details of 'Récompenses aux Otages' including the Médaille des Victimes de l'Invasion and the Médaille de la Reconnaissance Française.

**Service Historique de la Défense, formerly the Service Historique de l'Armée
de la Terre (SHD)**

5 N 398-9: Copies of the *Gazette des Ardennes*.

7 N 143: Information on the military status of *mobilisables* from the occupied region.

16 N 1306: Military important information on occupied France and Belgium provided by *évadés* and refugees.

16 N 1310: Information on occupied France provided by evacuated persons.

16 N 1462: Commission de Contrôle postal de Lille during the Allied reoccupation.

16 N 1558-9: Documents on Alsace-Lorraine and the Allied occupation of Germany, as well as the *contrôle postal*.

16 N 1581-2: G.Q.G., Etat-Major, 2^e Bureau, Service Spécial, Circulation – Circulation et rapatriement entre la France, la Belgique, le Luxembourg, et le pays Rhénans. Réfugiés-rapatriés-suspects.

17 N 207-8: Documents on the Mission Militaire Française attached to the American Army.

17 N 295: Information on the Mission Militaire attached to the British army.

17 N 393-4: Documents outlining the treatment of liberated populations, including triage of suspects and relations between the Mission Militaire and the local population.

17 N 433-5: Documents concerning newly-liberated regions, including military and geographical information, as well as interviews with the local population outlining the treatment of Allied POWs.

17 N 439-42: Mission Militaire près l'Armée Britannique. Deals with militarily important information concerning occupied France, topography, and evacuations of liberated areas.

17 N 447, 449, 450: Lists of interpreters attached to Allied armies.

19 N 547: III^{ème} Armée, 2^e Bureau, Renseignements sur les suspects, 1914-1918.

19 N 549: III^{ème} Armée, 2^e Bureau, Renseignements sur les départements envahis, décembre 1916-1917.

19 N 658: Service de Renseignements information on the occupied area, including interrogations of Allied POWs.

19 N 668-9: Lists of suspects and potentially useful persons in the 'régions envahies,' especially the Ardennes, the Marne, and Meurthe-et-Moselle.

19 N 882-3: Lists of suspects and potentially useful persons in the 'régions envahies,' especially the Aisne.

19 N 1035-6: Documents on the reoccupation of invaded territory, including triage, suspects and counter-espionage.

19 N 1571: Information provided by *rapatriés* concerning the occupied area.

The Imperial War Museum (IWM)

2482 Con Shelf & P114/2: Private papers of Edith Cavell.

PST 6318: Proclamation, Belgium, October 1915, announcing Cavell's execution.

7501 75/93/1: Private papers of D.J. Tunmore.

The National Archives of the United States of America (US NA)

Record Group 120: entry 198 and Record Group 165: Copies of British I(b) documents on suspect individuals in occupied France and Belgium.

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